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THE SHREWSBURY EDITION OF THE WORKS OF  
1. SAMUEL BUTLER. EDITED BY HENRY FESTING JONES  
AND A. T. BARTHOLOMEW. IN TWENTY VOLUMES.  
• VOLUME EIGHTEEN: COLLECTED ESSAYS, VOL. I



SAMUEL BUTLER

From a photograph by Pizzetta at Varallo, 1889

# COLLECTED ESSAYS

*by*

SAMUEL BUTLER



VO . 1

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OF THE TWENTY-TWO ITEMS COLLECTED IN these two volumes and grouped according to subject, ten have already appeared in one or both of the previous collections of Butler's essays, *viz.*, *Essays on Life, Art, and Science* (1904), and *The Humour of Homer, and other Essays* (1913). Both these volumes were edited by the late Richard Alexander Streatfeild; and his introductions to them, reprinted at the beginning of the present volume, will enable the reader to see exactly how they were composed and how they compare with one another. For the Shrewsbury Edition the text of 1913 has been followed, with a few corrections; and the pamphlet connected with the Resurrection and the Odyssey, as also Part I of "A Sculptor and a Shrine," have been once more omitted for the reasons set forth by Streatfeild, pp. xi, xii *post*. The ten pieces which have already appeared in Streatfeild's collections are distinguished in the Contents to the present volume ii by an asterisk.

Of the remaining twelve pieces "God the Known and God the Unknown" (which first appeared in *The Examiner*, 1879) is reprinted from the separate edition of that work brought out by Streatfeild in 1909; and four other items are now for the first time collected from the columns of the journals in which they originally appeared. These are:

"A Clergyman's Doubts."

"The Subdivision of the Organic World into Animal and Vegetable."

"Portraits of Gentile and Giovanni Bellini."

"L'Affaire Holbein-Rippel."

Butler's numerous letters, etc., to the press (mostly of a controversial nature, and all of them sufficiently embodied in his various works) have not been reprinted.

The following pieces, *viz.*:

"Life and Habit, vol. 2."

"On the Genesis of Feeling."



## Collected Essays

"On Knowing what gives us Pleasure."

"Proficiency and Originality."

"Croesus's Kitchen-Maid."

"Was the Odyssey written by a Woman?"

"The *Works and Days* of Hesiod translated"

are now printed for the first time from Butler's mss. Prefixed to each piece will be found a note detailing the circumstances of its writing and publication.

For the illustrations in "The Sanctuary of Montrigone," "L'Affaire Holbein-Rippel," and "A Medieval Girl School," which for the most part agree with the original illustrations in *The Universal Review*, use has been made of Butler's own negatives and silver-prints (some of which have been kindly lent for the purpose by the Master and Fellows of St. John's College, Cambridge), and of the line-blocks made for *The Universal Review*. A collotype reproduction of the picture in the Louvre is prefixed to the papers on "Portraits of Gentile and Giovanni Bellini," these having originally appeared unillustrated.

The editors take this opportunity of informing Butler's readers that with the publication of these two volumes they have before them everything which Butler left in manuscript in a sufficiently revised state to justify printing. There are, of course, a large number of Notes in the ms. Note-Books which have never been printed; as to these the reader is referred to the Introduction to the *Note-Books* in the Shrewsbury Edition (vol. xx). There is also his Correspondence, arranged and annotated by himself, which has recently been bound into sixteen volumes; and a separate volume containing his correspondence with Miss Savage. Very full use of these letters was made in the *Memoir*.

1925.

H.F.J.

A.T.B.

IT IS HARDLY NECESSARY TO APOLOGIZE FOR the miscellaneous character of the following collection of essays. Samuel Butler was a man of such unusual versatility, and his interests were so many and so various, that his literary remains were bound to cover a wide field. Nevertheless, it will be found that several of the subjects to which he devoted much time and labour are not represented in these pages. I have not thought it necessary to reprint any of the numerous pamphlets and articles which he wrote upon the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, since these were all merged in *The Authoress of the Odyssey*, which gives his matured views upon everything relating to the Homeric poems. For a similar reason I have not included an essay on the evidence for the Resurrection of Jesus Christ, which he printed in 1865 for private circulation, since he subsequently made extensive use of it in *The Fair Haven*.

Two of the essays in this collection were originally delivered as lectures; the remainder were published in *The Universal Review* during 1888, 1889, and 1890.

I should perhaps explain why two other essays of his, which also appeared in *The Universal Review*, have been omitted.

The first of these, entitled "L'Affaire Holbein-Rippel," relates to a drawing of Holbein's "Danse des Paysans," in the Basle Museum, which is usually described as a copy, but which Butler believed to be the work of Holbein himself. This essay requires to be illustrated in so elaborate a manner that it was impossible to include it in a book of this size.<sup>1</sup>

The second essay, which is a sketch of the career of the sculptor Tabachetti, was published as the first section of an article entitled "A Sculptor and a Shrine," of which the second section is here given under the title, "The Sanctuary of Montrigone." The section devoted to the sculptor represents all that Butler then knew about Tabachetti, but since it was written various documents have come to light,

<sup>1</sup> [See pp. ix, x, *ante*.]

## Collected Essays.

principally owing to the investigations of Cavaliere Francesco Negri, of Casale Monferrato, which negative some of Butler's most cherished conclusions. Had Butler lived he would either have rewritten his essay in accordance with Cavaliere Negri's discoveries, of which he fully recognized the value, or incorporated them into the revised edition of *Ex Voto*, which he intended to publish.<sup>1</sup> As it stands, the essay requires so much revision that I have decided to omit it altogether, and to postpone giving English readers a full account of Tabachetti's career until a second edition of *Ex Voto* is required. Meanwhile I have given a brief summary of the main facts of Tabachetti's life in a note to the essay on "Art in the Valley of Saas." Anyone who wishes for further details of the sculptor and his work will find them in Cavaliere Negri's pamphlet, *Il Santuario di Crea* (Alessandria, 1902).

The three essays grouped together under the title of "The Deadlock in Darwinism" may be regarded as a postscript to Butler's four books on evolution, viz., *Life and Habit*; *Evolution, Old and New*; *Unconscious Memory*; and *Luck, or Cunning?* An occasion for the publication of these essays seemed to be afforded by the appearance in 1889 of Mr. Alfred Russel Wallace's *Darwinism*; and although nearly fourteen years have elapsed since they were published in *The Universal Review*, I have no fear that they will be found to be out of date. How far, indeed, the problem embodied in the deadlock of which Butler speaks is from solution was conclusively shown by the correspondence which appeared in the *Times* in May 1903, occasioned by some remarks made at University College by Lord Kelvin in moving a vote of thanks to Professor Henslow after his lecture on "Present Day Rationalism." Lord Kelvin's claim for a recognition of the fact that in organic nature scientific thought is compelled to accept the idea of some kind of directive power, and his statement that biologists are coming once more to a firm acceptance of a vital principle, drew from several distinguished men of science retorts heated enough to prove

<sup>1</sup> [See *Ex Voto* in the Shrewsbury Edition.]

## Introduction to "Essays" (1904)

beyond a doubt that the gulf between the two main divisions of evolutionists is as wide to-day as it was when Butler wrote. It will be well, perhaps, for the benefit of readers who have not followed the history of the theory of evolution during its later developments, to state in a few words what these two main divisions are. All evolutionists agree that the differences between species are caused by the accumulation and transmission of variation; but they do not agree as to the causes to which the variations are due. The view held by the older evolutionists, Buffon, Erasmus Darwin, and Lamarck, who have been followed by many modern thinkers, including Herbert Spencer and Butler, is that the variations occur mainly as the result of effort and design; the opposite view, which is that advocated by Mr. Wallace in *Darwinism*, is that the variations occur merely as the result of chance. The former is sometimes called the teleological view, because it recognizes the presence in organic nature of design, whether it be called creative power, directive force, directivity, or vital principle; the latter view, in which the existence of desire is absolutely negatived, is now usually described as Weismannism, from the name of the writer who has been its principal advocate in recent years.

In conclusion, I must thank my friend Mr. Henry Festing Jones most warmly for the invaluable assistance which he has given me in preparing these essays for publication, in correcting the proofs, and in compiling the introduction and notes.

R. A. STREATFEILD.

THE NUCLEUS OF THIS BOOK IS THE COLLECTION of essays by Samuel Butler, which was originally published by Mr. Grant Richards in 1904 under the title *Essays on Life, Art, and Science*, and reissued by Mr. Fifield in 1908. To these are now added another essay, entitled "The Humour of Homer," a biographical sketch of the author kindly contributed by Mr. Henry Festing Jones, which will add materially to the value of the edition, and a portrait in photogravure from a photograph taken in 1889—the period of the essays.<sup>1</sup>

"The Humour of Homer" was originally delivered as a lecture at the Working Men's College in Great Ormond Street on the 30th January 1892, the day on which Butler first promulgated his theory of the Trapanese origin of the Odyssey in a letter to the *Athenaeum*. Later in the same year it was published with some additional matter by Messrs. Metcalfe and Co. of Cambridge. For the next five years Butler was engaged upon researches into the origin and authorship of the Odyssey, the results of which are embodied in his book *The Authoress of the Odyssey*, originally published by Messrs Longman in 1897. Butler incorporated a good deal of "The Humour of Homer" into *The Authoress of the Odyssey*, but the section relating to the Iliad naturally found no place in the later work. For the sake of this alone "The Humour of Homer" deserves to be better known. Written as it was for an artisan audience, and professing to deal only with one side of Homer's genius, "The Humour of Homer" must not, of course, be taken as an exhaustive statement of Butler's views upon Homeric questions. It touches but lightly on important points, particularly regarding the origin and authorship of the Odyssey, which are treated at much greater length in *The Authoress of the Odyssey*.

Nevertheless, "The Humour of Homer" appears to me

<sup>1</sup> This biographical sketch is reprinted in vol. I of the Shrewsbury Edition. The portrait referred to forms the frontispiece to the present volume. — A.T.B.

## Introduction to "Essays" (1913)

to have a special value as a kind of general introduction to Butler's more detailed study of the *Odyssey*. His attitude towards the Homeric poems is here expressed with extraordinary freshness and force. What that attitude was is best explained in his own words: "If a person would understand either the *Odyssey* or any other ancient work, he must never look at the dead without seeing the living in them, nor at the living without thinking of the dead. We are too fond of seeing the ancients as one thing, and the moderns as another." Butler did not undervalue the philological and archaeological importance of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, but it was mainly as human documents that they appealed to him. This, I am inclined to suspect, was the root of the objection of academic critics to him and his theories. They did not so much resent the suggestion that the author of the *Odyssey* was a woman; they could not endure that he should be treated as a human being.

The three essays grouped together under the title "The Deadlock in Darwinism" may be regarded as a postscript to Butler's four books on evolution, viz., *Life and Habit*; *Evolution, Old and New*; *Unconscious Memory*; and *Luck, or Cunning?* When these essays were first published in book form in 1904, I ventured to give a brief summary of Butler's position with regard to the main problem of evolution. I need now only refer readers to Mr. Festing Jones's biographical sketch and, for fuller details, to the masterly introduction contributed by Professor Marcus Hartog to the new edition of *Unconscious Memory* (A. C. Fifield, 1910), and recently reprinted in his *Problems of Life and Reproduction* (John Murray, 1913), in which Butler's work in the field of biology and his share in the various controversies connected with the study of evolution are discussed with the authority of a specialist.<sup>1</sup>

July 1913.

R. A. STREATFEILD.

<sup>1</sup> See Note to *Unconscious Memory* in the Shrewsbury Edition, p. xi.  
A.T.B.



GOD THE KNOWN AND GOD THE UNKNOWN





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NOTE

“ God the Known and God the Unknown ” is here reprinted from the edition published by R. A. Streatfeild in 1909.

. A.T.B.

GOD THE KNOWN AND GOD THE UNKNOWN " first appeared in the form of a series of articles which were published in *The Examiner* in May, June, and July 1879. Samuel Butler subsequently revised the text of his work, presumably with the intention of republishing it, though he never carried the intention into effect. In the present edition I have followed his revised version almost without deviation. I have, however, retained a few passages which Butler proposed to omit, partly because they appear to me to render the course of his argument clearer, and partly because they contain characteristic thoughts and expressions of which none of his admirers would wish to be deprived. In the list of Butler's works "God the Known and God the Unknown" follows *Life and Habit*, which appeared at the end of 1877, and *Evolution, Old and New*, which was published in May 1879. It is scarcely necessary to point out that the three works are closely akin in subject and treatment, and that "God the Known and God the Unknown" will gain in interest by being considered in relation to its predecessors.

R. A. STREATFEILD.



# *God the Known and God the Unknown*

## CHAPTER ONE. INTRODUCTION

MANKIND HAS EVER BEEN READY TO discuss matters in the inverse ratio of their importance, so that the more closely a question is felt to touch the hearts of all of us, the more incumbent it is considered upon prudent people to profess that it does not exist, to frown it down, to tell it to hold its tongue, to maintain that it has long been finally settled, so that there is now no question concerning it.

So far, indeed, has this been carried through all time past that the actions which are most important to us, such as our passage through the embryonic stages, the circulation of our blood, our respiration, etc., etc., have long been formulated beyond all power of reopening question concerning them—the mere fact or manner of their being done at all being ranked among the great discoveries of recent ages. Yet the analogy of past settlements would lead us to suppose that so much unanimity was not arrived at all at once, but rather that it must have been preceded by much smouldering discontent, which again was followed by open warfare; and that even after a settlement had been ostensibly arrived at, there was still much secret want of conviction on the part of many for several generations.

There are many who see nothing in this tendency of our nature but occasion for sarcasm; those, on the other hand, who hold that the world is by this time old enough to be the best judge concerning the management of its own affairs will scrutinize this management with some closeness before they venture to satirize it; nor will they do so for long without finding justification for its apparent recklessness; for we must all fear responsibility upon matters about which we feel we know but little; on the other hand we must all continually act, and for the most part promptly. We do so, therefore, with greater security when we can persuade both ourselves and others that a matter is already pigeon-holed

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than if we feel that we must use our own judgement for the collection, interpretation, and arrangement of the papers which deal with it. Moreover, our action is thus made to appear as if it received collective sanction; and by so appearing it receives it. Almost any settlement, again, is felt to be better than none, and the more nearly a matter comes home to everyone, the more important is it that it should be treated as a sleeping dog, and be let to lie, for if one person begins to open his mouth, fatal developments may arise in the Babel that will follow.

It is not difficult, indeed, to show that, instead of having reason to complain of the desire for the postponement of important questions, as though the world were composed mainly of knaves or fools, such fixity as animal and vegetable forms possess is due to this very instinct. For if there had been no reluctance, if there were no friction and *vis inertiae* to be encountered even after a theoretical equilibrium had been upset, we should have had no fixed organs nor settled proclivities, but should have been daily and hourly undergoing Protean transformations, and have still been throwing out pseudopodia like the amoeba. True, we might have come to like this fashion of living as well as our more steady-going system if we had taken to it many millions of ages ago when we were yet young; but we have contracted other habits, which have become so confirmed that we cannot break with them. We therefore now hate that which we should perhaps have loved if we had practised it. This, however, does not affect the argument, for our concern is with our likes and dislikes, not with the manner in which those likes and dislikes have come about. The discovery that organism is capable of modification at all has occasioned so much astonishment that it has taken the most enlightened part of the world more than a hundred years to leave off expressing its contempt for such a crude, shallow, and preposterous conception. Perhaps in another hundred years we shall learn to admire the good sense, endurance, and thorough Englishness of organism in having been so averse

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to change, even more than its versatility in having been willing to change so much.

Nevertheless, however conservative we may be, and however much alive to the folly and wickedness of tampering with settled convictions—no matter what they are—without sufficient cause, there is yet such a constant though gradual change in our surroundings as necessitates corresponding modification in our ideas, desires, and actions. We may think that we should like to find ourselves always in the same surroundings as our ancestors, so that we might be guided at every touch and turn by the experience of our race, and be saved from all self-communing or interpretation of oracular responses uttered by the facts around us. Yet the facts will change their utterance in spite of us; and we, too, change with age and ages in spite of ourselves, so as to see the facts around us as perhaps even more changed than they actually are. It has been said, *Tempora mutantur nos et mutamur in illis*. The passage would have been no less true if it had stood, *Nos mutamur et tempora mutantur in nobis*. Whether the organism or the surroundings began changing first is a matter of such small moment that the two may be left to fight it out between themselves; but, whichever view is taken, the fact will remain that whenever the relations between the organism and its surroundings have been changed, the organism must either succeed in putting the surroundings into harmony with itself, or itself into harmony with the surroundings; or must be made so uncomfortable as to be unable to remember itself as subjected to any such difficulties, and therefore to die through inability to recognize its own identity further.

Under these circumstances, organism must act in one or other of these two ways: it must either change slowly and continuously with the surroundings, paying cash for everything, meeting the smallest change with a corresponding modification so far as is found convenient; or it must put off change as long as possible, and then make larger and more sweeping changes.



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Both these courses are the same in principle, the difference being only one of scale, and the one being a miniature of the other, as a ripple is an Atlantic wave in little; both have their advantages and disadvantages, so that most organisms will take the one course for one set of things and the other for another. They will deal promptly with things which they can get at easily, and which lie more upon the surface; those, however, which are more troublesome to reach, and lie deeper, will be handled upon more cataclysmic principles, being allowed longer periods of repose followed by short periods of greater activity. Animals breathe and circulate their blood by a little action many times a minute; but they feed, some of them, only two or three times a day, and breed for the most part not more than once a year, their breeding season being much their busiest time. It is on the first principle that the modification of animal forms has proceeded mainly; but it may be questioned whether what is called a sport is not the organic expression of discontent which has been long felt, but which has not been attended to, nor been met step by step by as much small remedial modification as was found practicable: so that when a change does come it comes by way of revolution. Or, again (only that it comes to much the same thing), a sport may be compared to one of those happy thoughts which sometimes come to us unbidden after we have been thinking for a long time what to do, or how to arrange our ideas, and have yet been unable to arrive at any conclusion.

So with politics, the smaller the matter the prompter, as a general rule, the settlement; on the other hand, the more sweeping the change that is felt to be necessary, the longer it will be deferred.

The advantages of dealing with the larger questions by more cataclysmic methods are obvious. For, in the first place, all composite things must have a system, or arrangement of parts, so that some parts shall depend upon and be grouped round others, as in the articulation of a skeleton and the arrangement of muscles, nerves, tendons, etc., which

## *God the Known and God the Unknown*

are attached to it. To meddle with the skeleton is like taking up the street, or the flooring of one's house; it so upsets our arrangements that we put it off till whatever else is found wanted, or whatever else seems likely to be wanted for a long time hence, can be done at the same time. Another advantage is in the rest which is given to the attention during the long hollows, so to speak, of the waves between the periods of resettlement. Passion and prejudice have time to calm down, and when attention is next directed to the same question, it is a refreshed and invigorated attention—an attention, moreover, which may be given with the help of new lights derived from other quarters that were not luminous when the question was last considered. Thirdly, it is more easy and safer to make such alterations as experience has proved to be necessary than to forecast what is going to be wanted. Reformers are like paymasters, of whom there are only two bad kinds, those who pay too soon, and those who do not pay at all.

### CHAPTER TWO: COMMON GROUND

I HAVE now, perhaps, sufficiently proved my sympathy with the reluctance felt by many to tolerate discussion upon such a subject as the existence and nature of God. I trust that I may have made the reader feel that he need fear no sarcasm or levity in my treatment of the subject which I have chosen. I will, therefore, proceed to sketch out a plan of what I hope to establish, and this in no doubtful or unnatural sense, but by attaching the same meanings to words as those which we usually attach to them, and with the same certainty, precision, and clearness as anything else is established which is commonly called known.

As to what God is, beyond the fact that he is the Spirit and the Life which creates, governs, and upholds all living

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things, I can say nothing. I cannot pretend that I can show more than others have done in what the Spirit and the Life consists, which governs all living things and animates them. I cannot show the connection between consciousness and the will, and the organ, much less can I tear away the veil from the face of God, so as to show wherein will and consciousness consist. No philosopher, whether Christian or Rationalist, has attempted this without discomforture; but I can, I hope, do two things: Firstly, I can demonstrate, perhaps more clearly than modern science is prepared to admit, that there does exist a single Being or Animator of all living things—a single Spirit, whom we cannot think of under any meaner name than God; and, secondly, I can show something more of the *persona* or bodily expression, mask, and mouthpiece of this vast Living Spirit than I know of as having been familiarly expressed elsewhere, or as being accessible to myself or others, though doubtless many works exist in which what I am going to say has been already said.

- Aware that much of this is widely accepted under the name of Pantheism, I venture to think it differs from Pantheism with all the difference that exists between a coherent, intelligible conception and an incoherent, unintelligible one. I shall therefore proceed to examine the doctrine called Pantheism, and to show how incomprehensible and valueless it is.

I will then indicate the Living and Personal God about whose existence and about many of whose attributes there is no room for question; I will show that man has been so far made in the likeness of this Person or God, that he possesses all its essential characteristics, and that it is this God who has called man and all other living forms, whether animals or plants, into existence, so that our bodies are the temples of His spirit; that it is this which sustains them in their life and growth, who is one with them, living, moving, and having His being in them; in whom, also, they live and move, they in Him and He in them; He being not a Trinity in Unity only, but an Infinity in Unity, and a Unity in an Infinity;

## *God: the Known and God the Unknown*

eternal in time past, for so much time at least that our minds can come no nearer to eternity than this; eternal for the future as long as the universe shall exist; ever changing, yet the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever. And I will show this with so little ambiguity that it shall be perceived not as a phantom or hallucination following upon a painful straining of the mind and a vain endeavour to give coherency to incoherent and inconsistent ideas, but with the same ease, comfort, and palpable flesh-and-blood clearness with which we see those near to us; whom, though we see them at times best as through a glass darkly, we still see face to face, even as we are ourselves seen.

I will also show in what way this Being exercises a moral government over the world, and rewards and punishes as according to His own laws.

Having done this I shall proceed to compare this conception of God with those that are currently accepted, and will endeavour to show that the ideas now current are in truth efforts to grasp the one on which I shall here insist. Finally, I shall persuade the reader that the differences between the so-called atheist and the so-called theist are differences rather about words than things, inasmuch as not even the most prosaic of modern scientists will be inclined to deny the existence of this God, while few theists will feel that this, the natural conception of God, is a less worthy one than that to which they have been accustomed.

### CHAPTER THREE: PANTHEISM I

THE Rev. J. H. Blunt, in his *Dictionary of Sects, Heresies, etc.*, defines Pantheists as "those who hold that God is everything, and everything is God."

If it is granted that the value of words lies in the definiteness and coherency of the ideas that present themselves to

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us when the words are heard or spoken—then such a sentence as “God is everything and everything is God” is worthless.

For we have so long associated the word “God” with the idea of a Living Person, who can see, hear, will, feel pleasure, displeasure, etc., that we cannot think of God, and also of something which we have not been accustomed to think of as a Living Person, at one and the same time, so as to connect the two ideas and fuse them into a coherent thought. While we are thinking of the one, our minds involuntarily exclude the other, and *vice versa*; so that it is as impossible for us to think of anything as God, or as forming part of God, which we cannot also think of as a Person, or as a part of a Person, as it is to produce a hybrid between two widely distinct animals. If I am not mistaken, the barrenness of inconsistent ideas, and the sterility of widely distant species or genera of plants and animals, are one in principle—sterility of hybrids being due to barrenness of ideas, and barrenness of ideas arising from inability to fuse unfamiliar thoughts into a coherent conception. I have insisted on this at some length in *Life and Habit*, but can do so no further here.<sup>1</sup>

In like manner we have so long associated the word “Person” with the idea of a substantial visible body, limited in extent, and animated by an invisible something which we call Spirit, that we can think of nothing as a person which does not also bring these ideas before us. Any attempt to make us imagine God as a Person who does not fulfil the conditions which our ideas attach to the word “person,” is *ipso facto* atheistic, as rendering the word God without meaning, and therefore without reality, and therefore non-existent to us. Our ideas are like our organism, they will stand a vast amount of modification if it is effected slowly and without shock, but the life departs out of them, leaving the form of an idea without the power thereof, if they are jarred too rudely.

Any being, then, whom we can imagine as God, must have

<sup>1</sup> Butler returned to this subject in *Luck, or Cunning?* which was originally published in 1887.—R.A.S.

## God the Known and God the Unknown

all the qualities, capabilities, and also all the limitations which are implied when the word "person" is used.

But, again, we cannot conceive of "everything" as a person. "Everything" must comprehend all that is to be found on earth, or outside of it, and we know of no such persons as this. When we say "persons" we intend living people with flesh and blood; so netimes we extend our conceptions to animals and plants but we have not hitherto done so as generally as I hope w shall some day come to do. Below animals and plants we have never in any seriousness gone. All that we have been able to regard as personal has had what we can call a living body, even though that body is vegetable only; and this body has been tangible, and has been comprised within certain definite limits, or within limits which have at any rate struck the eye as definite. And every part within these limits has been animated by an unseen something which we call soul or spirit. A person must be a *persona*—that is to say, the living mask and mouthpiece of an energy saturating it, and speaking through it. It must be animate in all its parts.

But "everything" is not animate. Animals and plants alone produce in us those ideas which can make reasonable people call them "persons" with consistency of intention. We can conceive of each animal and of each plant as a person; we can conceive again of a compound person like the coral polypes, or like a tree which is composed of a congeries of subordinate persons, inasmuch as each bud is a separate and individual plant. We can go farther than this, and, as I shall hope to show, we ought to do so; that is to say, we shall find it easier and more agreeable with our other ideas to go farther than not; for we should see all animal and vegetable life as united by a subtle and till lately invisible ramification, so that all living things are one tree-like growth, forming a single person. But we cannot conceive of oceans, continents, and air as forming parts of a person at all; much less can we think of them as forming one person with the living forms that inhabit them.

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To ask this of us is like asking us to see the bowl and the water in which three gold-fish are swimming as part of the gold-fish. We cannot do it any more than we can do something physically impossible. We can see the gold-fish as forming one family, and therefore as in a way united to the personality of the parents from which they sprang, and therefore as members one of another, and therefore as forming a single growth of gold-fish, as boughs and buds unite to form a tree; but we cannot by any effort of the imagination introduce the bowl and the water into the personality, for we have never been accustomed to think of such things as living and personal. Those, therefore, who tell us that "God is everything, and everything is God," require us to see "everything" as a person, which we cannot; or God as not a person, which again we cannot.

Continuing the article of Mr. Blunt from which I have already quoted, I read:

"Linus, in a passage which has been preserved by Stobaeus, exactly expresses the notion afterwards adopted by Spinoza: 'One sole energy governs all things; all things are unity, and each portion is All; for of one integer all things were born; in the end of time all things shall again become unity; the unity of multiplicity.' Orpheus, his disciple, taught no other doctrine."

According to Pythagoras, "an adept in the Orphic philosophy," "the soul of the world is the Divine energy which interpenetrates every portion of the mass, and the soul of man is an efflux of that energy. The world, too, is an exact impress of the Eternal Idea, which is the mind of God." John Scotus Erigena taught that "all is God and God is all." William of Champeaux, again, two hundred years later, maintained that "all individuality is one in substance, and varies only in its non-essential accidents and transient properties." Amalric of Bena and David of Dinant followed the theory out "into a thoroughgoing Pantheism." Amalric held that "All is God and God is all. The Creator and the creature are one Being. Ideas are at once creative and

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created, subjective and objective. God is the end of all, and all return to Him. As every variety of humanity forms one manhood, so the world contains individual forms of one eternal essence." David of Dinant only varied upon this by "imagining a corporeal unity. Although body, soul, and eternal substance are three, these three are one and the same being."

Giordano Bruno maintained the world of sense to be "a vast animal having the Deity for its living soul." The inanimate part of the world is thus excluded from participation in the Deity, and a conception that our minds can embrace is offered us instead of one which they cannot entertain, except as in a dream, incoherently. But without such a view of evolution as was prevalent at the beginning of this century, it was impossible to see "the world of sense" intelligently, as forming "a vast animal." Unless, therefore, Giordano Bruno held the opinions of Buffon, Dr. Erasmus Darwin, and Lamarck, with more definiteness than I am yet aware of his having done, his contention must be considered • as a splendid prophecy, but as little more than a prophecy. He continues, "Birth is expansion from the one centre of life; life is its continuance, and death is the necessary return of the ray to the centre of light." This begins finely, but ends mystically. I have not, however, compared the English translation with the original, and must reserve a fuller examination of Giordano Bruno's teaching for another opportunity.

Spinoza disbelieved in the world rather than in God. He was an Acosmist, to use Jacobi's expression, rather than an Atheist. According to him, "the Deity and the Universe are but one substance, at the same time both spirit and matter, thought and extension, which are the only known attributes of the Deity."

My readers will, I think, agree with me that there is very little of the above which conveys ideas with the fluency and comfort which accompany good words. Words are like servants: it is not enough that we should have them—we



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must have the most able and willing that we can find, and at the smallest wages that will content them. Having got them we must make the best and not the worst of them. Surely, in the greater part of what has been quoted above, the words are barren letters only: they do not quicken within us and enable us to conceive a thought, such as we can in our turn impress upon dead matter, and mould that matter into another shape than its own, through the thought which has become alive within us. No offspring of ideas has followed upon them, or, if any at all, yet in such unwonted shape, and with such want of alacrity, that we loathe them as malformations and miscarriages of our minds. Granted that if we examine them closely we shall at length find them to embody a little germ of truth—that is to say, of coherency with our other ideas; but there is too little truth in proportion to the trouble necessary to get at it. We can get more truth, that is to say, more coherency—for truth and coherency are one—for less trouble in other ways.

But it may be urged that the beginnings of all tasks are difficult and unremunerative, and that later developments of Pantheism may be more intelligible than the earlier ones. Unfortunately, this is not the case. On continuing Mr. Blunt's article, I find the later Pantheists a hundredfold more perplexing than the earlier ones. With Kant, Schelling, Fichte, and Hegel, we feel that we are with men who have been decoyed into a hopeless quagmire; we understand nothing of their language—we doubt whether they understand themselves, and feel that we can do nothing with them but look at them and pass them by.

In my next chapter I propose to show the end which the early Pantheists were striving after, and the reason and naturalness of their error.

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## CHAPTER FOUR: PANTHEISM II

THE earlier Pantheists were misled by the endeavour to lay hold of two distinct ideas, the one of which was a reality that has since been grasped and is of inestimable value, the other a phantom which has misled all who have followed it. The reality is the unity of Life, the oneness of the guiding and animating spirit which quickens animals and plants, so that they are all the outcome and expression of a common mind, and are in truth one animal; the phantom is the endeavour to find the origin of things, to reach the fountain-head of all energy, and thus to lay the foundations on which a philosophy may be constructed which none can accuse of being baseless, or of arguing in a circle.

In following as through a thick wood after the phantom, our forefathers from time to time caught glimpses of the reality, which seemed so wonderful as it eluded them and flitted back again into the thickets, that they declared it must be the phantom they were in search of, which was thus evidenced as actually existing. Whereon, instead of mastering such of the facts they met with as could be captured easily—which facts would have betrayed the hiding-places of others, and these again of others, and so *ad infinitum*—they overlooked what was within their reach, and followed hotly through brier and brake after an imaginary greater prize.

Great thoughts are not to be caught in this way. They must present themselves for capture of their own free will, or be taken after a little coyness only. They are like wealth and power, which, if a man is not born to them, are the more likely to take him, the more he has restrained himself from an attempt to snatch them. They hanker after those only who have tamed their nearer thoughts. Nevertheless, it is impossible not to feel that the early Pantheists were true prophets and seers, though the things were unknown to them without which a complete view was unattainable. What does Linus mean, we ask ourselves, when he says: "One sole energy governs all things"? How can one sole energy

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govern, we will say, the reader and the chair on which he sits? What is meant by an energy governing a chair? If by an effort we have made ourselves believe we understand something which can be better expressed by these words than by any others, no sooner do we turn our backs than the ideas so painfully collected fly apart again. No matter how often we go in search of them, and force them into juxtaposition, they prove to have none of that innate coherent power with which ideas combine that we can hold as true and profitable.

Yet if Linus had confined his statement to living things, and had said that one sole energy governed all plants and animals, he would have come near both to being intelligible and true. For if, as we now believe, all animals and plants are descended from a single cell, they must be considered as cousins to one another, and as forming a single tree-like animal, every individual plant or animal of which is as truly one and the same person with the primordial cell as the oak a-thousand years old is one and the same plant with the acorn out of which it has grown. This is easily understood, but will, I trust, be made to appear simpler presently.

When Linus says, "All things are unity, and each portion is All; for of one integer all things were born," it is impossible for plain people—who do not wish to use words unless they mean the same things by them as both they and others have been in the habit of meaning—to understand what is intended. How can each portion be all? How can one Londoner be all London? I know that this, too, can in a way be shown, but the resulting idea is too far to fetch, and when fetched does not fit in well enough with our other ideas to give it practical and commercial value. How, again, can all things be said to be born of one integer, unless the statement is confined to living things, which can alone be born at all, and unless a theory of evolution is intended, such as Linus would hardly have accepted? •

Yet limit the "all things" to "all living things," grant the theory of evolution, and explain "each portion is All"

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to mean that all life is akin, and possesses the same essential fundamental characteristics, and it is surprising how nearly Linus approaches both to truth and intelligibility.

It may be said that the animate and the inanimate have the same fundamental substance, so that a chair might rot and be absorbed by grass, which grass might be eaten by a cow, which cow might be eaten by a man; and by similar processes the man might become a chair; but these facts are not presented to the mind by saying that "one energy governs all things"—a chair, we will say, and a man; we could only say that one energy governed a man and a chair, if the chair were a reasonable living person, who was actively and consciously engaged in helping the man to attain a certain end, unless, that is to say, we are to depart from all usual interpretation of words, in which case we invalidate the advantages of language and all the sanctions of morality.

"All things shall again become unity" is intelligible as meaning that all things probably have come from a single elementary substance, say hydrogen or what not, and that they will return to it; but the explanation of unity as being the "unity of multiplicity" puzzles; if there is any meaning it is too recondite to be of service to us.

What, again, is meant by saying that "the soul of the world is the Divine energy which interpenetrates every portion of the mass"? The soul of the world is an expression which, to myself, and, I should imagine, to most people, is without propriety. We cannot think of the world except as earth, air, and water, in this or that state, on and in which there grow plants and animals. What is meant by saying that earth has a soul, and lives? Does it move from place to place erratically? Does it feed? Does it reproduce itself? Does it make such noises, or commit such vagaries as shall make us say that it feels? Can it achieve its ends, and fail of achieving them through mistake? If it cannot, how has it a soul more than a dead man has a soul, out of whom we say that the soul has departed, and whose body we conceive of as returning to dead earth, inasmuch as it is now soulless? Is

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there any unnatural violence which can be done to our thoughts by which we can bring the ideas of a soul and of water, or of a stone into combination, and keep them there for long together? The ancients, indeed, said they believed their rivers to be gods, and carved likenesses of them under the forms of men; but even supposing this to have been their real mind, can it by any conceivable means become our own? Granted that a stone is kept from falling to dust by an energy which compels its particles to cohere, which energy can be taken out of it and converted into some other form of energy; granted (which may or may not be true) also, that the life of a living body is only the energy which keeps the particles which compose it in a certain disposition; and granted that the energy of the stone may be convertible into the energy of a living form, and that thus, after a long journey a tired idea may lag after the sound of such words as "the soul of the world." Granted all the above, nevertheless to speak of the world as having a soul is not sufficiently in harmony with our common notions, nor does it go sufficiently with the grain of our thoughts to render the expression a meaning one, or one that can be now used, with any propriety or fitness, except by those who do not know their own meaninglessness. Vigorous minds will harbour vigorous thoughts only, or such as bid fair to become so; and vigorous thoughts are always simple, definite, and in harmony with everyday ideas.

We can imagine a soul as living in the lowest slime that moves, feeds, reproduces itself, remembers, and dies. The amoeba wants things, knows it wants them, alters itself so as to try and alter them, thus preparing for an intended modification of outside matter by a preliminary modification of itself. It thrives if the modification from within is followed by the desired modification in the external object; it knows that it is well, and breeds more freely in consequence. If it cannot get hold of outside matter, or cannot proselytize that matter and persuade it to see things through its own (the amoeba's) spectacles—if it cannot *convert* that matter,

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if the matter persists in *disagreeing* with it—its spirits droop, its soul is disquieted within it, it becomes listless like a withering flower—it languishes and dies. We cannot imagine a thing to live at all and yet be soulless except in sleep for a short time, and even so not quite soulless. The idea of a soul, or of that unknown something for which the word “soul” is our hieroglyphic, and the idea of living organism, unite so spontaneously, and stick together so inseparably, that no matter how often we sunder them they will elude our vigilance and come together, like true lovers, in spite of us. Let us not attempt to divorce ideas that have so long been wedded together.

I submit, then, that Pantheism, even as explained by those who had entered on the outskirts only of its great morass, nevertheless holds out so little hope of leading to any comfortable conclusion that it will be more reasonable to occupy our minds with other matter than to follow Pantheism further. The Pantheists speak of a person without meaning a person; they speak of a “him” and a “he” without having in their minds the idea of a living person with all its inevitable limitations. Pantheism is, therefore, as is said by Mr. Blunt in another article, “practically nothing else than Atheism; it has no belief in a personal deity overruling the affairs of the world, as Divine Providence, and is, therefore, Atheistic,” and again, “Theism believes in a spirit superior to matter, and so does Pantheism; but the spirit of Theism is self-conscious, and therefore personal and of individual existence—a nature *per se*, and upholding all things by an active control; while Pantheism believes in spirit that is of a higher nature than brute matter, but is a mere unconscious principle of life, impersonal, irrational as the brute matter that it quickens.”

If this verdict concerning Pantheism is true—and from all I can gather it is as nearly true as anything can be said to be which is predicated of an incoherent idea—the Pantheistic God is an attempt to lay hold of a truth which has nevertheless eluded its pursuers.

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In my next chapter I will consider the commonly received, orthodox conception of God, and compare it with the Pantheistic. I will show that it, too, is Atheistic, inasmuch as, in spite of its professing to give us a conception of God, it raises no ideas in our minds of a person or Living Being—and a God who is not this is non-existent.

### CHAPTER FIVE: ORTHODOX THEISM

WE have seen that Pantheism fails to satisfy, inasmuch as it requires us to mean something different by the word "God" from what we have been in the habit of meaning. I have already said—I fear, too often—that no conception of God can have any value or meaning for us which does not involve his existence as an independent Living Person of ineffable wisdom and power, vastness, and duration both in the past and for the future. If such a Being as this can be found existing and made evident, directly or indirectly, to human senses, there is a God. If otherwise, there is no God, or none, at any rate, so far as we can know, none with whom we need concern ourselves. No conscious personality, no God. An impersonal God is as much a contradiction in terms as an impersonal person.

Unfortunately, when we question orthodox theology closely, we find that it supposes God to be a person who has no material body such as could come within the range of any human sense, and make an impression upon it. He is supposed to be of a spiritual nature only, except in so far as one part of his triune personality is, according to the Athanasian Creed, "perfect man, of a reasonable soul and human flesh subsisting."

Here, then, we find ourselves in a dilemma.

On the one hand, we are involved in the same difficulty as in the case of Pantheism, inasmuch as a person without flesh and blood, or something analogous, is not a person; we are

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required, therefore, to believe in a personal God, who has no true person; to believe, that is to say, in an impersonal person.

This, as we have seen already, is Atheism under another name, being, as it is, destructive of all idea of God whatever; for these words do not convey an idea of something which human intelligence can understand up to a certain point, and which it can watch going out of sight into regions beyond our view, but in the same direction—as we may infer other stars in space beyond the farthest that we know of; they convey utterly self-destructive ideas, which can have no real meaning, and can only be thought to have a meaning by ignorant and uncultivated people. Otherwise such foundation as human reason rests upon—that is to say, the current opinion of those whom the world appraises as reasonable and agreeable, or capable of being agreed with for any time—is sapped; the whole thing tumbles down, and we may have square circles and round triangles, which may be declared to be no longer absurdities and contradictions in terms, but mysteries that go beyond our reason, without being contrary to it. Few will maintain this, and those few may be neglected; an impersonal person must therefore be admitted to be nonsense, and an immaterial God to be Atheism in another shape.

On the other hand, if God is “of a reasonable soul and human flesh subsisting,” and if he thus has the body without which he is—as far as we are concerned—non-existent, this body must yet be reasonably like other bodies, and must exist in some place and at some time. Furthermore, it must do sufficiently nearly what all other “human flesh” belonging to “perfect man” must do, or cease to be human flesh. Our ideas are like our organisms; they have some little elasticity and circumstance-suiting power, some little margin on which, as I have elsewhere said, side-notes may be written, and glosses on the original text; but this power is very limited. As offspring will only, as a general rule, vary very little from its immediate parents, and as it will fail either



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immediately or in the second generation if the parents differ too widely from one another, so we cannot get our idea of—we will say a horse—to conjure up to our minds the idea of any animal more unlike a horse than a pony is; nor can we get a well-defined idea of a combination between a horse and any animal more remote from it than an ass, zebra, or giraffe. We may, indeed, make a statue of a flying horse, but the idea is one which cannot be made plausible to any but ignorant people. So “human flesh” may vary a little from “human flesh” without undue violence being done to our reason and to the right use of language, but it cannot differ from it so much as not to eat, drink, nor waste and repair itself. “Human flesh,” which is without these necessary adjuncts, is human flesh only to those who can believe in flying horses with feathered wings and bills like birds—that is to say, to vulgar and superstitious persons.

Lastly, not only must the “perfect man,” who is the second person of the Godhead according to the orthodox faith, and who subsists of “human flesh” as well as of a “reasonable soul,” not only must this person exist, but he must exist in some place either on this earth or outside it. If he exists on earth, he must be in Europe, Asia, Africa, America, or on some island, and if he were met with he must be capable of being seen and handled in the same way as all other things that can be called perfect man are seen; otherwise he is a perfect man who is not only not a perfect man, but who does not in any considerable degree resemble one. It is not, however, pretended by anyone that God, the “perfect man,” is to be looked for in any place upon the surface of the globe.

If, on the other hand, the person of God exists in some sphere outside the earth, his human flesh again proves to be of an entirely different kind from all other human flesh, for we know that such flesh cannot exist except on earth; if in space unsupported, it must fall to the ground, or into some other planet, or into a sun, or go on revolving round the earth or some other heavenly body—or *not be personal*. None of those whose opinions will carry weight will assign a

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position either in some country on this earth, or yet again in space, to Jesus Christ, but this involves the rendering meaningless of all expressions which involve his personality.

The Christian conception, therefore, of the Deity proves when examined with any desire to understand our own meaning (and what lawlessness so great as the attempt to impose words upon our understandings which have no lawful settlement within them?) to be no less a contradiction in terms than the Pantheistic conception. It is Atheistic, as offering us a God which is not a God, inasmuch as we can conceive of no such being, nor of anything in the least like it. It is, like Pantheism, an illusion, which can be believed only by those who repeat a formula which they have learnt by heart in a foreign language of which they understand nothing, and yet aver that they believe it. There are doubtless many who will say that this is possible, but the majority of my readers will hold that no proposition can be believed or disbelieved until its nature is understood.

It may perhaps be said that there is another conception of God possible, and that we may see him as personal, without at the same time believing that he has any actual tangible existence. Thus we personify hope, truth, and justice, without intending to convey to anyone the impression that these qualities are women, with flesh and blood. Again, we do not think of Nature as an actual woman, though we call her one; why may we not conceive of God, then, as an expression whereby we personify, by a figure of speech only—the thing that is intended being no person, but our own highest ideal of power, wisdom, and duration?

There would be no reason to complain of this if this manner of using the word “God” were well understood. Many words have two meanings, or even three, without any mischievous confusion of thought following. There can not only be no objection to the use of the word God as a manner of expressing the highest ideal of which our minds can conceive, but on the contrary no better expression can be found, and it is a pity the word is not thus more generally used.

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Few, however, would be content with any such limitation of God as that he should be an idea only, an expression for certain qualities of human thought and action. Whence, it may be fairly asked, did our deeply rooted belief in God as a Living Person originate? The idea of him as of an inconceivably vast, ancient, powerful, loving, and yet formidable Person is one which survives all changes of detail in men's opinion. I believe there are a few very savage tribes who are as absolutely without religious sense as the beasts of the field, but the vast majority for a long time past have been possessed with an idea that there is somewhere a Living God who is the Spirit and the Life of all that is, and who is a true Person with an individuality and self-consciousness of his own. It is only natural that we should be asked how such an idea has remained in the minds of so many—who differ upon almost every other part of their philosophy—for so long a time if it was without foundation, and a piece of dreamy mysticism only.

True, it has generally been declared that this God is an infinite God, and an infinite God is a God without any bounds or limitations; and a God without bounds or limitations is an impersonal God; and an impersonal God is Atheism. But may not this be the incoherency of prophecy which precedes the successful mastering of an idea? May we not think of this illusory expression as having arisen from inability to see the whereabouts of a certain vast but tangible Person as to whose existence men were nevertheless clear? If they felt that it existed, and yet could not say where, nor wherein it was to be laid hands on, they would be very likely to get out of the difficulty by saying that it existed as an infinite Spirit, partly from a desire to magnify what they felt must be so vast and powerful, and partly because they had as yet only a vague conception of what they were aiming at, and must, therefore, best express it vaguely.

We must not be surprised that, when an idea is still inchoate its expression should be inconsistent and imperfect—ideas will almost always during the earlier history of a thought

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be put together experimentally, so as to see whether or no they will cohere. Partly out of indolence, partly out of the desire of those who brought the ideas together to be declared right, and partly out of joy that the truth should be supposed found, incoherent ideas will be kept together longer than they should be; nevertheless they will in the end detach themselves and go, if other present themselves which fit into their place better. There is no consistency which has not once been inconsistent, nor coherency that has not been incoherent. The incoherency of our ideas concerning God is due to the fact that we have not yet truly found him, but it does not argue that he does not exist and cannot be found anywhere after more diligent search; on the contrary, the persistence of the main idea, in spite of the incoherency of its details, points strongly in the direction of believing that it rests upon a foundation in fact.

But it must be remembered there can be no God who is not personal and material: and if personal, then, though inconceivably vast in comparison with man, still limited in space and time, and capable of making mistakes concerning his own interests, though as a general rule right in his estimates concerning them. Where, then, is this Being? He must be on earth, or what folly can be greater than speaking of him as a person? What are persons on any other earth to us, or we to them? He must have existed and be going to exist through all time, and he must have a tangible body. Where, then, is the body of this God? And what is the mystery of his Incarnation?

It will be my business to show this in the following chapter.

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### CHAPTER SIX: THE TREE OF LIFE

ATHEISM denies knowledge of a God of any kind. Pantheism and Theism alike profess to give us a God, but they alike fail to perform what they have promised. We can know nothing of the God they offer us, for not even do they themselves profess that any of our senses can be cognizant of him. They tell us that he is a personal God, but that he has no material person. This is disguised Atheism. What we want is a Personal God, the glory of whose Presence can be made in part evident to our senses, though what we can realize is less than nothing in comparison with what we must leave for ever unimagined.

And truly such a God is not far from every one of us; for if we survey the broader and deeper currents of men's thoughts during the last three thousand years, we may observe two great and steady sets as having carried away with them the more eligible races of mankind. The one is a tendency from Polytheism to Monotheism; the other from Polytypism to Monotypism of the earliest forms of life—all animal and vegetable forms having at length come to be regarded as differentiations of a single substance—to wit, protoplasm.

No man does well so to kick against the pricks as to set himself against tendencies of such depth, strength, and permanence as this. If he is to be in harmony with the dominant opinion of his own and of many past ages, he will see a single God-impregnate substance as having been the parent from which all living forms have sprung. One spirit, and one form capable of such modification as its directing spirit shall think fit; one soul and one body, one God and one Life.

For the time has come when the two unities so painfully arrived at must be joined together as body and soul, and be seen not as two, but one. There is no living organism untenanted by the Spirit of God, nor any Spirit of God perceivable by man apart from organism embodying and express-

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ing it. God and the Life of the World are like a mountain, which will present different aspects as we look at it from different sides, but which, when we have gone all round it, proves to be one only. God is the animal and vegetable world, and the animal and vegetable world is God.

I have repeatedly said that we ought to see all animal and vegetable life as uniting to form a single personality. I should perhaps explain this more fully, for the idea of a compound person is one which at first is not very easy to grasp, inasmuch as we are not conscious of any but our more superficial aspects, and have therefore until lately failed to understand that we are ourselves compound persons. I may perhaps be allowed to quote from an earlier work:

“Each cell in the human body is now admitted by physiologists to be a person with an intelligent soul, differing from our own more complex soul in degree and not in kind, and, like ourselves, being born, living, and dying. It would appear, then, as though ‘we,’ our souls,’ or ‘selves,’ or ‘personalities,’ or by whatever name we may prefer to be called, are but the consensus and full-flowing stream of countless sensations and impulses on the part of our tributary souls or ‘selves,’ who probably know no more that we exist, and that they exist as a part of us, than a microscopic insect knows the results of spectrum analysis, or than an agricultural labourer knows the working of the British Constitution; and of whom we know no more than we do of the habits and feelings of some class widely separated from our own.”

After which it became natural to ask the following question:

“Is it possible to avoid imagining that we may be ourselves atoms, undesignedly combining to form some vaster being, though we are utterly incapable of perceiving this being as a single individual, or of realizing the scheme and scope of our own combination? And this, too, not a spiritual being, which, without matter or what we think matter of some sort, is as complete nonsense to us as though men bade us love and lean upon an intelligent vacuum, but

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a being with what is virtually flesh and blood and bones, with organs, senses, dimensions in some way analogous to our own, into some other part of which being at the time of our great change we must infallibly re-enter, starting clean anew, with by-gones by-gones, and no more ache for ever from age or antecedents.

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“ ‘ An organic being,’ writes Mr. Darwin, ‘ is a microcosm, a little universe, formed of a host of self-propagating organisms inconceivably minute and numerous as the stars in Heaven.’ As these myriads of smaller organisms are parts and processes of us, so are we parts and processes of life at large ” (*Life and Habit*, chap. 7).

A tree is composed of a multitude of subordinate trees, each bud being a distinct individual. So coral polypes form a tree-like growth of animal life, with branches from which spring individual polypes that are connected by a common tissue and supported by a common skeleton. We have no difficulty in seeing a unity in multitude, and a multitude in unity here, because we can observe the wood and the gelatinous tissue connecting together all the individuals which compose either the tree or the mass of polypes. Yet the skeleton, whether of tree or of polype, is inanimate; and the tissue, whether of bark or gelatine, is only the matted roots of the individual buds; so that the outward and striking connection between the individuals is more delusive than real. The true connection is one which cannot be seen, and consists in the animation of each bud by a like spirit—in the community of soul, in “ the voice of the Lord which maketh men to be of one mind in an house ”—“ to dwell together in unity ”—to take what are practically identical views of things, and express themselves in concert under all circumstances. Provided this—the true unifier of organism—can be shown to exist, the absence of gross outward and visible but inanimate common skeleton is no bar to oneness of personality.

Let us picture to our minds a tree of which all the woody

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fibre shall be invisible, the buds and leaves seeming to stand in mid-air unsupported and unconnected with one another, so that there is nothing but a certain tree-like collocation of foliage to suggest any common principle of growth uniting the leaves.

Three or four leaves of different ages stand living together at the place in the air where the end of each bough should be; of these the youngest are still tender and in the bud, while the older ones are turning yellow and on the point of falling. Between these leaves a sort of twig-like growth can be detected if they are looked at in certain lights, but it is hard to see, except perhaps when a bud is on the point of coming out. Then there does appear to be a connection which might be called branch-like.

The separate tufts are very different from one another so that oak leaves, ash leaves, horse-chestnut leaves, etc., are each represented, but there is one species only at the end of each bough.

Though the trunk and all the inner boughs and leaves have disappeared, yet there hang here and there fossil leaves, also in mid-air; they appear to have been petrified, without method or selection, by what we call the caprices of nature; they hang in the path which the boughs and twigs would have taken, and they seem to indicate that if the tree could have been seen a million years earlier, before it had grown near its present size, the leaves standing at the end of each bough would have been found very different from what they are now. Let us suppose that all the leaves at the end of all the invisible boughs, no matter how different they now are from one another, were found in earliest budhood to be absolutely indistinguishable, and afterwards to develop towards each differentiation through stages which were indicated by the fossil leaves. Lastly, let us suppose that though the boughs which seem wanted to connect all the living forms of leaves with the fossil leaves, and with countless forms of which all trace has disappeared, and also with a single root, have become invisible, yet that there is irrefrag-



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able evidence to show that they once actually existed, and indeed are existing at this moment, in a condition as real though as invisible to the eye as air or electricity. Should we, I ask, under these circumstances hesitate to call our imaginary plant or tree by a single name, and to think of it as one person, merely upon the score that the woody fibre was invisible? Should we not esteem the common soul, memories and principles of growth which are preserved between all the buds, no matter how widely they differ in detail, as a more living bond of union than a framework of wood would be, which, though it were visible to the eye, would still be inanimate?

The mistletoe appears as closely connected with the tree on which it grows as any of the buds of the tree itself; it is fed upon the same sap as the other buds are, which sap—however much it may modify it at the last moment—it draws through the same fibres, as do its foster-brothers—why then do we at once feel that the mistletoe is no part of the apple tree? Not from any want of manifest continuity, but from the spiritual difference—from the profoundly different views of life and things which are taken by the parasite and the tree on which it grows—the two *are* now different because they *think differently*—as long as they thought alike they *were* alike—that is to say they were protoplasm—they and we and all that lives meeting in this common substance.

We ought therefore to regard our supposed tufts of leaves as a tree, that is to say, as a compound existence, each one of whose component items is compounded of others which are also in their turn compounded. But the tree above described is no imaginary parallel to the condition of life upon the globe; it is perhaps as accurate a description of the Tree of Life as can be put into so small a compass. The most sure proof of a man's identity is the power to remember that such and such things happened, which none but he can know; the most sure proof of his remembering is the power to react his part in the original drama, whatever it may have been; if a man can repeat a performance with consummate

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truth, and can stand any amount of cross-questioning about it, he is the performer of the original performance, whatever it was. The memories which all living forms prove by their actions that they possess—the memories of their common identity with a single person in whom they meet—this is incontestable proof of their being animated by a common soul. It is certain, therefore, that all living forms, whether animal or vegetable, are in reality one animal; we and the mosses being part of the same vast person in no figurative sense, but with as much *bona fide* literal truth as when we say that a man's finger-nails and his eyes are parts of the same man.

It is in this Person that we may see the Body of God— and in the evolution of this Person, the mystery of His Incarnation.

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[In *Unconscious Memory*, chapter 5, Butler wrote: "In the articles above alluded to ('God the Known and God the Unknown') I separated the organic from the inorganic, but when I came to rewrite them I found that this could not be done, and that I must reconstruct what I had written." This reconstruction never having been effected, it may be well to quote further from *Unconscious Memory* (concluding chapter): "At parting, therefore, I would recommend the reader to see every atom in the universe as living and able to feel and remember, but in a humble way. He must have life eternal as well as matter eternal; and the life and the matter must be joined together inseparably as body and soul to one another. Thus he will see God everywhere, not as those who repeat phrases conventionally, but as people who would have their words taken according to their most natural and legitimate meaning; and he will feel that the main difference between him and many of those who oppose him lies in the fact that whereas both he and they use the same language, his opponents only half mean what they say, while he means it entirely. . . . We shall endeavour to see the so-called in-

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organic as living, in respect of the qualities it has in common with the organic, rather than the organic as non-living in respect of the qualities it has in common with the inorganic.”]

### CHAPTER SEVEN: THE LIKENESS OF GOD

IN my last chapter I endeavoured to show that each living being, whether animal or plant, throughout the world is a component item of a single personality, in the same way as each individual citizen of a community is a member of one state, or as each cell of our own bodies is a separate person, or each bud of a tree a separate plant. We must therefore see the whole varied congeries of living things as a single very ancient Being, of inconceivable vastness, and animated by one Spirit.

We call the octogenarian one person with the embryo of a few days old from which he has developed. An oak or yew tree may be two thousand years old, but we call it one plant with the seed from which it has grown. Millions of individual buds have come and gone, to the yearly wasting and repairing of its substance; but the tree still lives and thrives, and the dead leaves have life therein. So the Tree of Life still lives and thrives as a single person, no matter how many new features it has acquired during its development, nor, again, how many of its individual leaves fall yellow to the ground daily. The spirit or soul of this person is the Spirit of God, and its body—for we know of no soul or spirit without a body, nor of any living body without a spirit or soul, and if there is a God at all there must be a body of God—is the many-membered outgrowth of protoplasm, the ensemble of animal and vegetable life.

To repeat. The Theologian of to-day tells us that there is a God, but is horrified at the idea of that God having a body. We say that we believe in God, but that our minds

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refuse to realize an intelligent Being who has no bodily person. "Where then," says the Theologian, "is the body of your God?" We have answered, "In the living forms upon the earth, which, though they look many, are, when we regard them by the light of their history and of true analogies, one person only." The spiritual connection between them is a more real bond of union than the visible discontinuity of material parts is ground for separating them in our thoughts.

Let the reader look at a case of moths in the shop-window of a naturalist, and note the unspeakable delicacy, beauty, and yet serviceableness of their wings; or let him look at a case of humming-birds, and remember how infinitely small a part of Nature is the whole group of the animals he may be considering, and how infinitely small a part of that group is the case that he is looking at. Let him bear in mind that he is looking on the dead husk only of what was inconceivably more marvellous when the moths or humming-birds were alive. Let him think of the vastness of the earth, and of the activity by day and night through countless ages of such countless forms of animal and vegetable life as that no human mind can form the faintest approach to anything that can be called a conception of their multitude, and let him remember that all these forms have touched and touched and touched other living beings till they meet back on a common substance in which they are rooted, and from which they all branch forth so as to be one animal. Will he not in this real and tangible existence find a God who is as much more worthy of admiration than the God of the ordinary Theologian, as He is also more easy of comprehension?

For the Theologian dreams of a God sitting above the clouds among the cherubim, who blow their loud uplifted angel trumpets before Him, and humour Him as though He were some despot in an Oriental tale; but we enthrone Him upon the wings of birds, on the petals of flowers, on the faces of our friends, and upon whatever we most delight in of all that lives upon the earth. We then can not only love Him, but we can do that without which love has neither

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power nor sweetness, but is a phantom only, an impersonal person, a vain stretching forth of arms towards something that can never fill them—we can express our love and have it expressed to us in return. And this not in the uprearing of stone temples—for the Lord dwelleth in temples made with other organs than hands—nor yet in the cleansing of our hearts, but in the caress bestowed upon horse and dog, and kisses upon the lips of those we love.

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Wide, however, as is the difference between the orthodox Theologian and ourselves, it is not more remarkable than the number of the points on which we can agree with him, and on which, moreover, we can make his meaning clearer to himself than it can have ever hitherto been. He, for example, says that man has been made in the image of God, but he cannot mean what he says, unless his God has a material body; we, on the other hand, do not indeed believe that the body of God—the incorporation of all life—is like the body of a man, more than we believe each one of our own cells or subordinate personalities to be like a man in miniature; but we nevertheless hold that each of our tributary selves is so far made after the likeness of the body corporate that it possesses all our main and essential characteristics—that is to say, that it can waste and repair itself; can feel, move, and remember. To this extent, also, we—who stand in mean proportional between our tributary personalities and God—are made in the likeness of God; for we, and God, and our subordinate cells alike possess the essential characteristics of life which have been above recited. It is more true, therefore, for us to say that we are made in the likeness of God than for the orthodox Theologian to do so.

Nor, again, do we find difficulty in adopting such an expression as that “God has taken our nature upon Him.” We hold this as firmly, and much more so, than Christians can do, but we say that this is no new thing for Him to do, for that He has taken flesh and dwelt among us from the day

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that He first assumed our shape, some millions of years ago, until now. God cannot become man more especially than He can become other living forms, any more than *we* can be our eyes more especially than any other of our organs. We may develop larger eyes, so that our eyes may come to occupy a still more important place in our economy than they do at present; and in a similar way the human race may become a more predominant part of God than it now is—but we cannot admit that one living form is more like God than another; we must hold all equally like Him, inasmuch as they “keep ever,” as Buffon says, “the same fundamental unity, in spite of differences of detail—nutrition, development, reproduction” (and, I would add, “memory”) “being the common traits of all organic bodies.” The utmost we can admit is, that some embodiments of the Spirit of Life may be more important than others to the welfare of Life as a whole, in the same way as some of our organs are more important than others to ourselves.

But the above resemblances between the language which we can adopt intelligently and that which Theologians use vaguely, seem to reduce the differences of opinion between the two contending parties to disputes about detail. For even those who believe their ideas to be the most definite, and who picture to themselves a God as anthropomorphic as He was represented by Raffaele, are yet not prepared to stand by their ideas if they are hard pressed in the same way as we are by ours. Those who say that God became man and took flesh upon Him, and that He is now perfect God and perfect man of a reasonable soul and human flesh subsisting, will yet not mean that Christ has a heart, blood, a stomach, etc., like man's, which, if he has not, it is idle to speak of him as “perfect man.” I am persuaded that they do not mean this, nor wish to mean it; but that they have been led into saying it by a series of steps which it is very easy to understand and sympathize with, if they are considered with any diligence.

For our forefathers, though they might and did feel the

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existence of a Personal God in the world, yet could not demonstrate this existence, and made mistakes in their endeavour to persuade themselves that they understood thoroughly a truth which they had as yet perceived only from a long distance. Hence all the dogmatism and theology of many centuries. It was impossible for them to form a clear or definite conception concerning God until they had studied His works more deeply, so as to grasp the idea of many animals of different kinds and with no apparent connection between them, being yet truly parts of one and the same animal which comprised them in the same way as a tree comprises all its buds. They might speak of this by a figure of speech, but they could not see it as a fact. Before this could be intended literally, Evolution must be grasped, and not Evolution as taught in what is now commonly called Darwinism, but the old teleological Darwinism of eighty years ago. Nor is this again sufficient, for it must be supplemented by a perception of the oneness of personality between parents and offspring, the persistence of memory through all generations, the latency of this memory until rekindled by the recurrence of the associated ideas, and the unconsciousness with which repeated acts come to be performed. These are modern ideas which might be caught sight of now and again by prophets in time past, but which are even now mastered and held firmly only by the few.

When once, however, these ideas have been accepted, the chief difference between the orthodox God and the God who can be seen of all men is, that the first is supposed to have existed from all time, while the second has only lived for more millions of years than our minds can reckon intelligently; the first is omnipresent in all space, while the second is only present in the living forms upon this earth—that is to say, is only more widely present than our minds can intelligently embrace. The first is omnipotent and all-wise; the second is only quasi-omnipotent and quasi-all-wise. It is true, then, that we deprive God of that infinity which orthodox Theologians have ascribed to Him, but the bounds we leave Him

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are of such incalculable extent that nothing can be imagined more glorious or vaster; and in return for the limitations we have assigned to Him, we render it possible for men to believe in Him, and love Him, not with their lips only, but with their hearts and lives.

Which, I may now venture to ask my readers, is the true God—the God of the Theologian, or He whom we may see around us, and in whose presence we stand each hour and moment of our lives?

### CHAPTER EIGHT: THE LIFE EVERLASTING

LET us now consider the life which we can look forward to with certainty after death, and the moral government of the world here on earth.

If we could hear the leaves complaining to one another that they must die, and commiserating the hardness of their lot in having ever been induced to bud forth, we should, I imagine, despise them for their peevishness more than we should pity them. We should tell them that though we could not see reason for thinking that they would ever hang again upon the same—or any at all similar—bough as the same individual leaves, after they had once faded and fallen off, yet that as they had been changing personalities without feeling it during the whole of their leafhood, so they would on death continue to do this selfsame thing by entering into new phases of life. True, death will deprive them of conscious memory concerning their now current life; but, though they die as leaves, they live in the tree whom they have helped to vivify, and whose growth and continued well-being is due solely to this life and death of its component personalities.

We consider the cells which are born and die within us yearly to have been sufficiently honoured in having contri-



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buted their quatum to our life; why should we have such difficulty in seeing that a healthy enjoyment and employment of our life will give us a sufficient reward in that growth of God wherein we may live more truly and effectually after death than we have lived when we were conscious of existence? Is Handel dead when he influences and sets in motion more human beings in three months now than during the whole, probably, of the years in which he thought that he was alive? What is being alive if the power to draw men for many miles in order that they may put themselves *en rapport* with him is not being so? True, Handel no longer knows the power which he has over us, but this is a small matter; he no longer animates six feet of flesh and blood, but he lives in us as the dead leaf lives in the tree. He is with God, and God knows him though he knows himself no more.

This should suffice, and I observe in practice does suffice, for all reasonable persons. It may be said that one day the tree itself must die, and the leaves no longer live therein; and so, also, that the very God or Life of the World will one day perish, as all that is born must surely in the end die. But they who fret upon such grounds as this must be in so much want of a grievance that it were a cruelty to rob them of one: if a man who is fond of music tortures himself on the ground that one day all possible combinations and permutations of sounds will have been exhausted so that there can be no more new tunes, the only thing we can do with him is to pity him and leave him; nor is there any better course than this to take with those idle people who worry themselves and others on the score that they will one day be unable to remember the small balance of their lives that they have not already forgotten as unimportant to them—that they will one day die to the balance of what they have not already died to. I never knew a well-bred or amiable person who complained seriously of the fact that he would have to die. Granted we must all sometimes find ourselves feeling sorry that we cannot remain for ever at our present age, and that we may die so much sooner than we like; but these regrets are passing

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with well-disposed people, and are a *sine qua non* for the existence of life at all. For if people could live for ever so as to suffer from no such regret, there would be no growth nor development in life; if, on the other hand, there were no unwillingness to die, people would commit suicide upon the smallest contradiction, and the race would end in a twelve-month.

We then offer immortality, but we do not offer resurrection from the dead; we say that those who die live in the Lord whether they be just or unjust, and that the present growth of God is the outcome of all past lives; but we believe that as they live in God—in the effect they have produced upon the universal life—when once their individual life is ended, so it is God who knows of their life thenceforward and not themselves; and we urge that this immortality, this entrance into the joy of the Lord, this being ever with God, is true, and can be apprehended by all men, and that the perception of it should and will tend to make them lead happier, healthier lives; whereas the commonly received opinion is true with a stage truth only, and has little permanent effect upon those who are best worth considering. Nevertheless the expressions in common use among the orthodox fit in so perfectly with facts, which we must all acknowledge, that it is impossible not to regard the expressions as founded upon a prophetic perception of the facts.

Two things stand out with sufficient clearness. The first is the rarity of suicide even among those who rail at life most bitterly. The other is the little eagerness with which those who cry out most loudly for a resurrection desire to begin their new life. When comforting a husband upon the loss of his wife we do not tell him we hope he will soon join her; but we should certainly do this if we could even pretend we thought the husband would like it. I can never remember having felt or witnessed any pain, bodily or mental, which would have made me or anyone else receive a suggestion that we had better commit suicide without indignantly asking how our adviser would like to commit

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suicide himself. Yet there are so many and such easy ways of dying that indignation at being advised to commit suicide arises more from enjoyment of life than from fear of the mere physical pain of dying. Granted that there is much deplorable pain in the world from ill-health, loss of money, loss of reputation, misconduct of those nearest to us, or what not, and granted that in some cases these causes do drive men to actual self-destruction, yet suffering such as this happens to a comparatively small number, and occupies comparatively a small space in the lives of those to whom it does happen.

What, however, have we to say to those cases in which suffering and injustice are inflicted upon defenceless people for years and years, so that the iron enters into their souls, and they have no avenger. Can we give any comfort to such sufferers? and, if not, is our religion any better than a mockery—a filling the rich with good things and sending the hungry empty away? Can we tell them, when they are oppressed with burdens, yet that their cry will come up to God and be heard? The question suggests its own answer, for assuredly our God knows our innermost secrets: there is not a word in our hearts but He knoweth it altogether; He knoweth our down-sitting and our uprising, He is about our path and about our bed, and spieth out all our ways; He has fashioned us behind and before, and “we cannot attain such knowledge,” for, like all knowledge when it has become perfect, “*it is too excellent for us.*”

“Whither then,” says David, “shall I go from thy Spirit, or whither shall I go, then, from thy presence? If I climb up into heaven thou art there; if I go down into hell thou art there also. If I take the wings of the morning and remain in the uttermost parts of the sea; even there also shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me. If I say peradventure the darkness shall cover me, then shall my night be turned into day: the darkness and light to thee are both alike. *For my reins are thine*; thou hast covered me in my mother’s womb . . . My bones are not hid from thee: though I be made secretly and fashioned beneath in the earth,

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thine eyes did see my substance, yet being unperfect; and in thy book were all my members written, which day by day were fashioned when as yet there was none of them . . . Do I not hate them, O Lord, that hate thee? and am I not grieved with them that rise up against thee? Yea, I hate them right sore, as though they were mine enemies" (Psalm cxxxix). There is not a word of this which we cannot endorse with more significance, as well as with greater heartiness, than those can who look upon God as He is commonly represented to them; whatever comfort, therefore, those in distress have been in the habit of receiving from these and kindred passages, we intensify rather than not. We cannot, alas! make pain cease to be pain, nor injustice easy to bear; but we can show that no pain is bootless, and that there is a tendency in all injustice to right itself; suffering is not inflicted wilfully, as it were by a magician who could have averted it; nor is it vain in its results, but unless we are cut off from God by having dwelt in some place where none of our kind can know of what has happened to us, it will move God's heart to redress our grievance, and will tend to the happiness of those who come after us, even if not to our own.

The moral government of God over the world is exercised through us, who are his ministers and persons, and a government of this description is the only one which can be observed as practically influencing men's conduct. God helps those who help themselves, because in helping themselves they are helping Him. Again, *Vox populi vox Dei*. The current feeling of our peers is what we instinctively turn to when we would know whether such and such a course of conduct is right or wrong; and so Paul clenches his list of things that the Philippians were to hold fast with the words, "whatsoever things are of good fame"—that is to say, he falls back upon an appeal to the educated conscience of his age. Certainly the wicked do sometimes appear to escape punishment, but it must be remembered there are punishments from within which do not meet the eye. If these fall

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on a man, he is sufficiently punished; if they do not fall on him, it is probable we have been over hasty in assuming that he is wicked.

### CHAPTER NINE: GOD THE UNKNOWN

THE reader will already have felt that the panzoistic conception of God—the conception, that is to say, of God as comprising all living units in His own single person—does not help us to understand the origin of matter, nor yet that of the primordial cell which has grown and unfolded itself into the present life of the world. How was the world rendered fit for the habitation of the first germ of Life? How came it to have air and water, without which nothing that we know of as living can exist? Was the world fashioned and furnished with aqueous and atmospheric adjuncts with a view to the requirements of the infant monad, and to his due development? If so, we have evidence of design, and if so of a designer, and if so there must be some far vaster Person who looms out behind our God, and who stands in the same relation to him as he to us. And behind this vaster and more unknown God there may be yet another, and another, and another.

It is certain that Life did not make the world with a view to its own future requirements. For the world was at one time red-hot, and there can have been no living being upon it. Nor is it conceivable that matter in which there was no life—inasmuch as it was infinitely hotter than the hottest infusion which any living germ can support—could gradually come to be alive without impregnation from a living parent. All living things that we know of have come from other living things with bodies and souls, whose existence can be satisfactorily established in spite of their being often too small for our detection. Since, then, the world was once without life, and since no analogy points in the direction of

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thinking that life can spring up spontaneously, we are driven to suppose that it was introduced into this world from some other source extraneous to it altogether, and if so we find ourselves irresistibly drawn to the inquiry whether the source of the life that is in the world—the impregnator of this earth—may not also have prepared the earth for the reception of his offspring, as a hen makes an egg-shell or a peach a stone for the protection of the germ within it? Not only are we drawn to the inquiry, but we are drawn also to the answer that the earth *was* so prepared designedly by a Person with body and soul who knew beforehand the kind of thing he required, and who took the necessary steps to bring it about.

If this is so we are members indeed of the God of this world, but we are not his children; we are children of the Unknown and Vaster God who called him into existence; and this in a far more literal sense than we have been in the habit of realizing to ourselves. For it may be doubted whether the monads are not as truly seminal in character as the procreative matter from which all animals spring.

It must be remembered that if there is any truth in the view put forward in *Life and Habit*, and in *Evolution, Old and New* (and I have met with no serious attempt to upset the line of argument taken in either of these books), then no complex animal or plant can reach its full development without having already gone through the stages of that development on an infinite number of past occasions. An egg makes itself into a hen because it knows the way to do so, having already made itself into a hen millions and millions of times over; the ease and unconsciousness with which it grows being in themselves sufficient demonstration of this fact. At each stage in its growth the chicken is reminded, by a return of the associated ideas, of the next step that it should take, and it accordingly takes it.

But if this is so, and if also the congeries of all the living forms in the world must be regarded as a single person, throughout their long growth from the primordial cell onwards to the present day, then, by parity of reasoning, the

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person thus compounded—that is to say, Life or God—should have already passed through a growth analogous to that which we find he has taken upon this earth on an infinite number of past occasions; and the development of each class of life, with its culmination in the vertebrate animals and in man, should be due *to recollection by God of his having passed through the same stages, or nearly so*, in worlds and universes which we know of from personal recollection, as evidenced in the growth and structure of our bodies, but concerning which we have no other knowledge whatsoever.

So small a space remains to me that I cannot pursue further the reflections which suggest themselves. A few concluding considerations are here alone possible.

We know of three great concentric phases of life, and we are not without reason to suspect a fourth. If there are so many there are very likely more, but we do not know whether there are or not. The innermost sphere of life we know of is that of our own cells. These people live in a world of their own, knowing nothing of us, nor being known by ourselves until very recently. Yet they can be seen under a microscope; they can be taken out of us, and may then be watched going here and there in perturbation of mind, endeavouring to find something in their new environment that will suit them, and then dying on finding how hopelessly different it is from any to which they have been accustomed. They live in us, and make us up into the single person which we conceive ourselves to form; we are to them a world comprising an organic and an inorganic kingdom, of which they consider themselves to be the organic, and whatever is not very like themselves to be the inorganic. Whether they are composed of subordinate personalities or not we do not know, but we have no reason to think that they are, and if we touch ground, so to speak, with life in the units of which our own bodies are composed, it is likely that there is a limit also in an upward direction, though we have nothing whatever to guide us as to where it is, nor any certainty that there is a limit at all.

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We are ourselves the second concentric sphere of life, we being the constituent cells which unite to form the body of God. Of the third sphere we know a single member only—the God of this world; but we see also the stars in heaven, and know their multitude. Analogy points irresistibly in the direction of thinking that these other worlds are like our own, begodded and full of life; it also bids us believe that the God of their world is begotten of one more or less like himself, and that his growth has followed the same course as that of all other growths we know of.

If so, he is one of the constituent units of an unknown and vaster personality who is composed of Gods, as our God is composed of all the living forms on earth, and as all those living forms are composed of cells. This is the Unknown God. Beyond this second God we cannot at present go, nor should we wish to do so, if we are wise. It is no reproach to a system that it does not profess to give an account of the origin of things; the reproach rather should lie against a system which professes to explain it, for we may be well assured that such a profession would, for the present at any rate, be an empty boast. It is enough if a system is true as far as it goes; if it throws new light on old problems, and opens up vistas which reveal a hope of further addition to our knowledge, and this I believe may be fairly claimed for the theory of life put forward in *Life and Habit* and *Evolution, Old and New*, and for the corollary insisted upon in these pages; a corollary which follows logically and irresistibly if the position I have taken in the above-named books is admitted.

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Let us imagine that one of the cells of which we are composed could attain to a glimmering perception of the manner in which he unites with other cells, of whom he knows very little, so as to form a greater compound person of whom he has hitherto known nothing at all. Would he not do well to content himself with the mastering of this conception, at any



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rate for a considerable time? Would it be any just ground of complaint against him on the part of his brother cells, that he had failed to explain to them who made the man (or, as he would call it, the omnipotent deity) whose existence and relations to himself he had just caught sight of?

But if he were to argue further on the same lines as those on which he had travelled hitherto, and were to arrive at the conclusion that there might be other men in the world besides the one whom he had just learnt to apprehend, it would be still no refutation or just ground of complaint against him that he had failed to show the manner in which his supposed human race had come into existence.

Here our cell would probably stop. He could hardly be expected to arrive at the existence of animals and plants differing from the human race, and uniting with that race to form a single Person or God, in the same way as he has himself united with other cells to form man. The existence, and much more the roundness of the earth itself, would be unknown to him, except by way of inference and deduction. The only universe which he could at all understand would be the body of the man of whom he was a component part.

How would not such a cell be astounded if all that we know ourselves could be suddenly revealed to him, so that not only should the vastness of this earth burst upon his dazzled view, but that of the sun and of his planets also, and not only these, but the countless other suns which we may see by night around us. Yet it is probable that an actual being is hidden from us, which no less transcends the wildest dream of our theologians than the existence of the heavenly bodies transcends the perception of our own constituent cells.

## A CLERGYMAN'S DOUBTS

THE following letters appeared in *The Examiner* between February and May 1879. There is some doubt as to whether the letters signed "Lewis Wright," "E.D.," and "Sollicitus" are by Butler, but he kept copies of the two former along with those which are known to be by him. The correspondence concluded with a letter from the late M. C. Hime, of Foyle College, Londonderry, in the issue of 14th June (see my *Memoir* of Butler, i, 295-299).

Mr. R. Child Bayley suggests in a letter to me dated 7th January 1924 that "Lewis Wright" may possibly be identified with a writer of that name who was an authority on the magic lantern, and who in 1882 published a book entitled, *Light: a course of experimental optics*, in which there is a "strange reference to Trinitarian Christianity."

The letters are now for the first time reprinted in full. Butler used part of no. 6 for the Dissertation on Lying in chapter 5 of *Alps and Sanctuaries*, and the whole letter is reprinted in the *Note-Books*. "The Righteous Man" (no. 13) is reprinted in the *Note-Books* and also in the *Memoir*.

H.F.J.

## A Clergyman's Doubts

*["The Examiner" has always been open to the freest expression of opinion, even if such opinion should appear startling or subversive. Truth can only be arrived at by free discussion; reform obtained by the ventilation of abuses. We therefore admit letters to this portion of our columns which we not only cannot endorse, but on which we, for the present, express no opinion whatever.]*

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE EXAMINER"

SIR,

I SEE FROM A RECENT NUMBER OF YOUR PAPER that you have "been looking out for a real representative of the School of Modern Thought," and that you have found one whose letter you proceed to give. While reading your preliminary paragraph it occurred to me to wonder whether your earnest man will always be the same person, or whether another would stand any chance of being listened to if he too appeared to be in earnest.

I am not used to writing in newspapers, nor can I lay any claim to being a representative of modern thought. Nevertheless, I have a story to tell, and reflections to make thereon, which I believe should be none the less interesting because the story is a common one and the reflections very obvious. I have asked many editors to open their columns to me, and have only refrained from asking others because their refusal was a foregone conclusion. All whom I have asked have refused me, not indeed that they denied the interest of the matter I would have discussed, but that they considered the subject "a dangerous one," "not yet ripe for discussion," "unsuited for the columns of a newspaper," and so forth. I do not blame them. It was right for me to try to speak, and right, doubtless, for them to prevent my doing so. Should you, Sir, follow their example I shall neither wonder nor complain; but should you take a different view from that taken by the majority of your fellow-editors, I shall not only

<sup>1</sup> From *The Examiner*, 15th February 1879.

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hold myself your debtor, but shall feel that there is at any rate one editor in London who does not fear to allow a correspondent to speak plainly, no matter how widely he may dissent from his opinions.

I am a clergyman, aged forty-five, with a wife and five children—two boys and three girls—the eldest of whom, a girl, is now eighteen years old, while the youngest is a boy of twelve. I have no private means; my living is worth a little under £400 a year, with a house; my health is good, my intelligence average, but I have no speciality; my temper is fair, but my friends say that I am apt to take things too much *au sérieux*, which I am afraid means that I am of a somewhat indolent or inelastic temperament.

I was brought up by an aunt, of whom I might truly say (quoting the epitaph which she wrote for my grandfather and grandmother's tombstone) that she was "unostentatious, but exemplary in the discharge of her religious, moral, and social duties." This extract should suffice to give the reader an insight into the character of the earliest influences that were brought to bear upon me. They were the same, I imagine—*mutatis mutandis*—as those brought to bear on nine out of every ten of your readers of my own age and in the middle class of life. My aunt had been brought up during the height of the Evangelical movement, and never lost the impressions that had been made upon her in her youth. She believed indulgence to be a bad thing for children, and though I well know she loved me tenderly, she seldom showed it. Yet I wanted for nothing: I had as much clothing as would keep me warm; I never felt a pang from hunger in my life; on my birthday I was allowed to order the pudding, and I might always choose my own hymns. May her shade forgive me if I smile as I write what I would not have written if I did not well know that it would remind not a few of your readers of their own childhood.

My aunt lived in a little out-of-the-way village in Warwickshire. It is hardly necessary to say that I did not come across any very advanced opinions. Naturally, I believed

## *A Clergyman's Doubts*

firmly every syllable that my aunt told me, that my teacher and the clergyman taught me in the village school which I attended, and that I observed everyone else whom I knew, or could conceive of as possibly existing, to believe also. What well-disposed lad would do otherwise?

Later on I was sent to what I must still call an excellent public school, and I there found the teaching which had early been instilled into me confirmed by the precepts and, to some extent, the practice of all whom I most respected. I was not a robust boy, and was more given to reading and thinking than to active bodily exercise; but it never occurred to me to doubt what was being told me upon all sides, more than it would have occurred to me to doubt the evidence of my senses. As I grew older it became plainer and plainer to me that there was one fact in the history of the universe in comparison with which all others must sink into insignificance—I refer to the Passion Death; and Resurrection of Jesus Christ.

My aunt had always wished me to become a clergyman; it now seemed to me—though the thought was less welcome than I could have wished when I reflected how much my Redeemer had sacrificed on my behalf—that all other professions were ignoble in comparison with that of being a minister of the Gospel. I therefore went to the University of Cambridge, being enabled to pay for my education partly through scholarships and exhibitions which I won, partly by the assistance of my aunt, who grew softer towards me as she grew older, and partly by the small sum which my father on his death had desired should be set apart for my education.

At Cambridge I made many friends, who were of much of the same way of thinking as myself. Some might be a trifle more High Church, some a trifle more Low, and some more Broad, but all were sincerely Christian. Many of the best men I knew there were, like myself, intended for the Church; nor had so much as a suspicion ever crossed the minds of one of us that all was not open and above board.

It was important for me to be ordained as soon as possible,

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and as soon as my age would allow of it I was admitted into deacon's orders by the then Bishop of Peterborough. This was in the year 1857.

Few of the younger men now living can have any idea of the profound peace which appeared to be reigning over the Church at the time of which I write. Between 1844, when the *Vestiges of Creation* appeared, and 1859, when *Essays and Reviews* marked the commencement of that storm which has since never ceased raging, I do not think a single book of note was published that could give uneasiness to orthodoxy. When I was at Cambridge the Evangelical movement had become a matter of ancient history; Tractarianism had spent its force, and had subsided into a tenth day's wonder; the *Vestiges of Creation* had long ceased to be talked about; the Catholic aggression scare had lost its terrors; Ritualism was still unnoticed by the general public; the Gorham and Hampden controversies were hull-down beneath Time's horizon; Dissent was not spreading; the Crimean War was the engrossing subject in men's thoughts, and there was no enemy to the faith which could assure even a languid interest. At no time probably in this century could an ordinary observer have detected less signs of coming disturbance than at the date of which I am writing.

But I need hardly say that the calm was only superficial. Those who watched the course of events more narrowly must have known that the wave of scepticism then breaking over Germany was setting towards our own shores also; nor, indeed, was it long before it reached them. Hardly had I been ordained and settled down to my curacy in a country parish, when three works appeared in quick succession after one another. The first was by the authors of the *Essays and Reviews*, the second by Mr. Charles Darwin, and the third by Bishop Colenso.

Living, as I did, in a small country village, it was some time before I heard of these books; even when I was made aware of their existence it was through the columns of religious newspapers, whose religious duty led them to mis-

## A Clergyman's Doubts

represent the issues raised, to think the real difficulties, and to throw as much dust as possible in the eyes of their readers. I believed what I saw written with so much confidence and with such apparent candour, and am ashamed to say that it was not until three or four years after the books I have named were published that I actually held one of them in my hands.

In the meantime I had married, and by singular good fortune had been presented to the living which I have ever since held.

I took up the *Essays and Reviews*, with the intention of trying to refute them, and thus contributing my share to the peace of the Church. Never shall I forget my shame and astonishment at the facts with which I now first became acquainted. I refute them indeed! It was they that refuted every article which I had looked upon as a foundation of my faith. I read Bishop Colenso's work on the Pentateuch immediately afterwards, and found it then, and ever since, unanswerable in all essential points. I followed up these two works with Mr. Darwin's *Origin of Species*. I devoured it with eagerness and gratitude, but when I laid it down it had become plain to me that the Christ-idea, like every living form of faith, or living faith of form, had descended with modification, and what was worse, that through insufficient breeding, it had reverted to a remote ancestor, and had resumed feral characteristics.

Now what, I would ask, was the proper course for me to take under these circumstances? I have said enough to show that my position—which was that of hundreds of other clergymen besides myself—was one of no small difficulty. If I find by your insertion of this letter that you think it likely to interest your readers, I shall be emboldened to write fully and unreservedly of the considerations which presented themselves to me, and by which my conduct was guided.

I am, Sir, yours faithfully,

AN EARNEST CLERGYMAN.



## Collected Essays

2

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE EXAMINER"<sup>1</sup>

SIR, I see with hardly less surprise than gratitude that you have inserted my letter. I therefore venture to continue my story. I cannot express to you the relief I find in being at last able to speak with the freedom of one who tells his story under the cover of disguise or night. I know no one with whom I do not find myself at times guiding my words and even thoughts according to my opinion of what he will think of me for having here spoken them; if this amounts to saying that I have no friend, I fear I must stand so far self-condemned, for I know no man to whom I could have spoken as in my last letter to yourself.

But let this pass. I would ask the patience of your readers if I go a little more fully into the steps which led me into the position I described to you. They were like those which lead to any other trap or *cul de sac*—unwary ones, along a path of which the dangers and difficulties had been so carefully concealed that no reasonable nature could have suspected them. Sir, if you have any young friend who is at present intending to take orders, or if your readers who see this letter have any such friend, let me beg of them to show it to him in time, so that he may examine what he is about to do from every side, and be walking with open eyes instead of closed ones. If you but save one man from pain such as I have myself endured, you will have done him an act of mercy for which he should be ever grateful to you.

Let me say we, for there are many of us. When we were children we were taught that it was sinful to doubt, and inconceivably wicked to deny, what we now hold hardly more believable than demonology or witchcraft. The more good and respectable people were, the more loudly they proclaimed their own belief and insisted upon ours. We were only a little loth, if that. We wanted to believe what we

<sup>1</sup> From *The Examiner*, 22nd February 1879.

## *A Clergyman's Doubts*

thought was right, and what we believed others to be believing. I know that times have changed, and that people might rightly accept then much that cannot be accepted rightly now. Still there was enough known then to have made it incumbent upon our teachers to have been more outspoken, and to have put us more upon guard; it is partly in order to protest against a continuance of this reserve—now ten times more culpable—that I am thus addressing you. For I fear that in this respect there is still but little change.

Speaking from my own experience I can truly say that there was not one of all the friends and companions of my boyhood and earlier manhood who had not been taught to accept the miracles as self-evident propositions, and to believe in a personal God who could speak, act, feel pleasure and pain, go here and there, even as we ourselves. In my undergraduate days I never met a single person who entertained the faintest shadow of doubt upon any of these points. If any one of us had met with such a doubter, we should have cut him. All our masters at school, all our tutors at college, confirmed us in our belief—not one of them ever gave us a word of warning that there was another side to the question of Christian evidences; all books in which any attempt was made to state that other side were so excluded from our school and college training that we did not even know their names. Divinity lecturers might occasionally allude to the fact that there had been infidels in the last century, whose errors had been long since refuted by Paley and Butler; they might also, in a few contemptuous sentences, dismiss as unworthy of serious notice a certain German named Strauss, who was what was called a Rationalist, and who was very shallow; but beyond this we knew nothing of any other position than that set before us by our instructors. Not only was the duty of attempting to discover and investigate other positions never presented to us, but their very existence was kept from us by those who considered the concealment as a part of their profession and as a religious duty. On what faith are we to act, if faith in the

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general good faith of others is an insufficient basis of action? On the faith of their general bad faith? Sir, I do not think so.

To return, however, to my own case. When the scales had fallen from my eyes, as I described to you in my last letter, I did indeed see men as trees walking. The times themselves had changed, but the change in them was as nothing in comparison with that in my own power to read them. In almost every newspaper that I took up, in almost every bishop's charge, in ministerial speeches, in the addresses of scientific men, in articles in our leading magazines, in books which lay on drawing-room tables, without causing surprise to anyone, anywhere and everywhere, but more especially among the most intelligent and promising young people, I found an omnipresent spirit of scepticism, which covertly, if not openly, declared the fundamental propositions of the Christian religion to rest upon nothing worthy of the name of evidence. And when I examined the grounds of this scepticism I found them justified.

Do I stand alone in believing that the Mosaic cosmogony, with its account of the creation of Eve from one of Adam's ribs, cannot now be accepted as historically true? Or is not my rejection of this account shared by the great majority of intelligent and right-minded people? Is there, think you, a single bishop upon the bench who would not, if pressed home, so qualify his profession of belief in this story that all the history should be found practically to have been eliminated? Sir, neither you nor I can believe that there is a single bishop who would not do this. In like manner, is there one to be found who thinks that Methuselah lived nearly a thousand years, that a flood covered the world, that Balaam's ass spoke to Balaam with a human tongue, or that Jonah remained alive and well three days in the belly of a whale? I pass over the New Testament miracles. Were we not taught to hope and pray that we might cling through life to those lessons of truth and honesty which we were taught at our mothers' knees? And is it true—is it honest to stand up

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with a solemn face and tell simple people that these things actually happened, when we well know that they did not! Whatever other faiths I may have lost, I have not lost this, but rather hold it more strongly year by year, and cling to it in my heart, however I may have departed from it in my practice.

Consider, again, what it was that I now found the services of the Church, the administration of sacraments, the catechizing of children, the visitation of sick and dying persons, to involve. I will not go into details, but let me ask your readers to think what those details must be, and upon the impossibility of any middle position between a frank acceptance and a no less frank rejection of the mysteries upon which they are founded.

Practically it came to this—that I was to be instant, in season and out of season, insisting on things that if true are the most solemn of all truths, but if not true the most heartless of all mockeries.

I was to do all this—and I assure you, Sir, that I ~~felt~~ this to be the worst part of it—for money. I had hired myself out for the wages of dishonour while acting in that good faith on which alone an honourable man should base his actions: I had built my house upon what I had believed to be a rock, and, lo! the quicksand had proved to be the rock, and the rock the quicksand.

Wherein, I asked myself, can I hold myself above those whom all the world unites to condemn as swindlers?—than the card-sharper, the quack doctor, or the falsifier of a balance-sheet? If all the truth were known concerning these poor people, would it not prove that they too, in nine cases out of ten, could plead extenuating circumstances of greater validity than any I could plead myself? Because I had taken, as it were, counterfeit coin, could I excuse myself for passing it to other people? Your paper would be full indeed if I were to ask all the questions that forced themselves upon me; but though I asked many questions there was but one answer that I could give myself, and that was that my life was a lie.

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And now for the alternative. To throw my wife and child penniless upon the world. I was utterly unmarketable. I had no brilliancy. I could think upon a subject and work it slowly out, correcting and recorrecting, till after three times the labour which a ready man would find necessary I achieved a result which was respectable from its sincerity, but which had no claim to literary merit. Was this the kind of man who could take to journalism, and support a wife and family by his pen? I had no interest, no connections; no money with which to study for a new profession. I could not at that time even state an account. I could take pupils? I had not even the money to take and furnish a house, and if I had, who was going to send his children to a freethinking clergyman? I, who talked so much about honour, forsooth, was it honourable in me to indulge my own scrupulousness at the expense of a woman and a child, to say nothing of others that might come? Was not honour beyond a certain bare necessary of life a luxury which those might indulge in who had the money to pay for it, but not otherwise?

Sir, if after this you care to hear further from me of the manner in which I and hundreds of others have made a very tolerable best of what must nevertheless always be a bad business, and how we have now come to smile at troubles which seemed once so serious, I will write to you another time.

I am, Sir, yours faithfully,  
AN EARNEST CLERGYMAN.

3

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE EXAMINER" <sup>1</sup>

SIR, It is a common error to argue as if there existed but one standard of morality, and as if all who fall short of that standard committed a positive dereliction of duty. What-

<sup>1</sup> From *The Examiner*, 22nd February 1879.

## *A Clergyman's Doubts*

ever entitles a man's conduct to the highest possible praise is constantly assumed to be the only universal rule of life. This principle requires distinct limitation before it can be recognized as more than a half-truth. It is the duty of each man to aim at the highest standard allowed by his individual temperament and by the circumstances of his daily life. But this standard varies with the entire scale of human virtue and ability. We have no right to blame any man because his self-abnegation falls short of the self-abnegation of the martyrs; and this is essential not only for the due recognition of the infirmities of humanity, but for the due estimation of its higher excellences. We should have no room for admiration of the heroes who have upheld their convictions in defiance of death itself if we regarded their conduct as merely the fulfilment of a general duty. No moral blame, therefore, attaches to persons situated as your correspondent, who prefer dissembling their convictions to abandoning their only means of subsistence. No doubt a truly heroic man would embrace the border alternative, at any cost to himself or to those whom he may hold dearer than himself, though not so dear as the cause of truth. But heroism ought not to be treated as if it were coincident with general duty.

There is, moreover, a wide field still open to any clergyman who can so far sympathize with the doctrines of his Church as to recognize in them a moral purpose. There is, for instance, the still prevalent opinion as to the moral aspect of religious dissent, which one who has renounced dogma may do much to improve. His attention not being engrossed by doctrinal controversy, he might well set himself against that *epicene* spirit of clericalism which enjoins the distinction between true religion and "the things of this world," to the extent of being horrified by the introduction into sermons of secular names and quotations. As Mr. Mill has pointed out, "a Church is more easily reformed from within than from without." There is no want of others to insist upon the dogmatic side of the Church's teaching. The sceptical clergyman has the more leisure to devote to the improvement

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of its moral side—of the conception of duty in its widest sense. There would remain the unavoidable moral harm of concealing his dissent from current theological doctrines. But he would be co-operating with whatever good those doctrines may convey, while he need have as little as possible to do with their alleged evil.

As Mr. John Morley observes (in *On Compromise*), this difficulty is inevitable while the priestly profession exists. We cannot reasonably expect a Church profoundly convinced that its doctrines embody all religious truth to subsidize scepticism. We must, therefore, continue to be confronted with the deplorable spectacle of a large body of educated men whose means of subsistence “depend on their abstaining from using their minds, or concealing the conclusions to which use of their minds has brought them”—the pledge of mental slavery being taken at the very time of life in which the mind should be most predisposed to gather truth from every possible quarter.

I am, etc.,

CANTAB.

### 4

SIR,<sup>1</sup> I thought it well in my last to describe a bygone phase of my own feelings, partly in order that I might record a mental struggle which so many have gone through, and for so long a time that it deserves occasional recording as part of the history of these times, and partly that I might show straightforward readers who see no use in words unless they are to be taken in their common acceptation, that I see the matter from their point of view as clearly as themselves. Perhaps if they had had my experience they might know—though I have still more complete sympathy with them than I could wish—that the question cannot be begged out of hand

<sup>1</sup> From *The Examiner*, 1st March 1879.

## *A Clergyman's Doubts*

so cheaply as by declaring that honest people should call a spade a spade. The subject on which I am writing is one of the most difficult and complicated which have arisen since the Reformation; indeed, if it is not absolutely the most so.

Nor yet, I venture to think, can it be settled so readily as by the sensible and quieting letter you have published immediately after my own; the matter has got too far; too much is generally known; and the teaching of the Church is too far behind that to which we turn when we wish to know how things really stand. It is true we have to deal with a belief which is still deeply rooted in the minds of many, and whose roots are interwoven with those of all manner of faiths and practices, which no one would disturb with more unwillingness than myself. But, on the other hand, these roots are, in the opinion of so many and such competent judges, already so much decayed that they endanger the health of those which we would fain preserve. I have settled the question for many years in my own case by admitting the force of circumstances to be too strong for me, and adopting much the same view as that taken by your correspondent "Cantab," but such a view, never more than tolerable even as regards those who took orders more than twenty years ago, is becoming daily less tolerable still, and is not to be tolerated at all if it involves a continuance of that concealment of the position from young minds which has rendered it little less than a *sine qua non* to myself.

I would, however, put the quietist position before your readers as fairly as I can, and let them judge of it for themselves. And I will do so by way of episode, and in a lighter strain. There was a custom called the *cowade*, according to which in old times—and I believe it obtains still in some remote countries—the husband was put to bed and nursed whenever his wife was confined, while the wife herself did a double share of hard work about the house. This custom, strange as it may seem, was honoured and cherished as a religion by those among whom it prevailed. Once upon a time, however, a melancholy youth fell into introspective



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humours upon the matter, and horrified his relations—most respectable people—by insisting that his wife should keep her room till her confinement was over, and by flatly refusing to be put to bed himself. The village was terribly scandalized by this profanity. In vain the chief Druid of the place was summoned that he might advise and reason with the offender. He spoke to him *most kindly*—everybody said so; but the young man maintained that though the Druid offered him baked stones of every shape and size—cottage stones, half-quartern stones, white and brown stones, all more or less like bread—yet there had been never so much as a mouthful of meal in the whole lot; so he still refused to be put to bed, disgracing an honourable name, and bringing down the grey hairs of his parents in sorrow to the grave.

Now let me ask those who would insist upon a spade's being always called a spade whether this young man's conduct was justifiable? I am ashamed of the question, for the answer is too obvious that it was not. It is as immoral to be too far in advance, as too far behind; as wrong to shock a false opinion as a true one, if the opinion be old, cherished, and bound up with many valuable ones. He who would oppose such an opinion must always do so covertly and by slow approaches, for morality is conversant about the *mos* or custom which is, rather than the *mos* which ought to be; and a *de facto* custom is as authoritative as a *de jure* one, if the allegiance is general, and the right is still impotent. The habits of men's thoughts can no more be changed suddenly without harm than those of their bodies, even though the bodily habits have been bad ones; for there is a plasticity, whether of mind or body, through which healthy habits will often so adapt themselves to unhealthy ones that it may be better for a man who has long stooped to continue stooping than to derange the now-adjusted action of his lungs and heart by breaking himself of the habit. A change in morals can be no more effected *per saltum* than a change in organism itself—than a poor breed can be suddenly improved by too wide a cross.

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I have said enough to show that I do not lose sight of considerations which, if I did not recognize, it would be impertinent in me to address you at all. But how if the most growing and healthy parts, whether of the mind or body, be striving in one direction, and the old habit be working in the other to check them and keep them down? And here lies the whole gist of the question. Have matters got to that pitch, or have they not, when it is no longer right for a man in my position to make more than the thinnest of secrets of his opinions? And, even so, is not the position at least one which he should hold with apology and great reluctance?

And now let me remind our readers of another story which overstates the case as much as my first understated it. Hans Andersen has told us how two cunning weavers played upon an emperor and his subjects by declaring they could make the monarch a suit of clothes which should be beautiful in the eyes of all good people, but invisible to knaves and fools. Accordingly they set up their looms and affected to be busy at work, while in reality they were weaving nothing and the looms were empty. Daily they obtained large quantities of the most delicate silks and richest gold threads, which they took away with them every evening, but which they asserted could be seen upon the looms woven into beautiful designs by all who were not either unfaithful or incapable. Of course everyone pretended to see and to admire the clothes; so it came to pass that the weavers were decorated and otherwise rewarded, while the emperor went in procession round his city with nothing on.

The people had been as much imposed upon as their ruler; they too, therefore, pretended to be in ecstasies over the beauty of the garments, till at last a boy exclaimed that the emperor had nothing on, whereon his father commended him, and the neighbours catching up the cry, the imposture was at an end. But though the emperor and his train-bearers and everyone in the procession and all the bystanders now knew the truth, it was decided that "the procession must go on"; so the train-bearers redoubled their efforts to

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seem as though they were holding up a real train, though there was no train to hold.

Granted it was right under the circumstances that the procession should go on, and that even a paid train-bearer should not fall to pitying himself too much for having got into the same scrape as other people; he might reflect that there is no such good practice for learning to swallow a camel gracefully as a course of gnat-straining, and that though a hero might protest, such heroes are seldom reliable people. Still, does there not remain a balance upon the other side which should make him ashamed of his position and indignant with the weavers? Could he or could the general public remain satisfied that these persons—who might be supposed by this time to have become a power in the State—should reform themselves from within; and could he make much allowance for the difficulty they might find in subsidizing other weavers who used real silk and gold thread? And if he took whole-truth views of the moral aspect of their manner of weaving, what sort of views would these probably be?

And here, Sir, I leave this difficult and painful question, satisfied if by these letters I have contributed a rain-drop to the stream that is steadily accumulating. The conclusion I came to is practically that of your correspondent, "Cantab," and I am more happy in it than I approve of myself for being; but the question is one which sooner or later must be handled much more boldly.

I am, Sir, yours faithfully,

AN EARNEST CLERGYMAN.

# *A Clergyman's Doubts*

5

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE EXAMINER" <sup>1</sup>

SIR, You have done a great service in giving the letters of "An Earnest Clergyman" insertion in your valuable paper, and I trust you will allow him to further inform your readers (as he declares he is willing to do) how he has managed "to make a very tolerable best of what must always be a bad business," for there are, alas! many in his own case who would rejoice at such knowledge—men compelled to live a life of dishonour and hypocrisy from the stern compulsion of material necessity. But, for his own sake, I hope he has found the solution of his awful difficulty elsewhere than in the philosophy of your correspondent, "Cantab." The cultured scepticism which "Cantab" holds can find a legitimate sphere of action in the Church, can only mean, in the case of its clerical disciple, a passive connivance with that which his intellect must regard as a gigantic imposition on mankind. Unfortunately, there are amongst the ranks of those who have renounced all belief in Christianity only too many men—eager candidates for an easy and gentlemanly career in life—who, *decipi volentes*, bring themselves to believe that by joining themselves to "Cantab's" school, which can number amongst its converts many in "high places," they can adopt the profession of the Church as honourable men. But there can be no such middle course compatible with honour, which requires an honest belief, or an equally honest denial. Either Christianity is the revelation of all truth, or it is, so far as its supernatural claims go, a living lie; and the conscience must view it in the one light or the other. And no condemnation can be too great for the man who enters, or remains in, the Church while rejecting in his own mind all belief in the dogmas of Christianity. Standing as he does a convicted perjurer, he is guilty of a dishonesty before

<sup>1</sup> From *The Examiner*, 1st March 1879.

## Collected Essays

God and men, to which the true man would prefer death  
father.

I remain, Sir, your obedient servant,

OXONIENSIS.

Oxford, February 25th.

### 6

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE EXAMINER"<sup>1</sup>

SIR, I am sorry for your correspondent "An Earnest Clergyman," for though he may say he "has come to smile at his troubles," his smile seems to be a grim one. We must all of us eat a peck of moral dirt before we die, but some must know more precisely than others when they are eating it; some, again, can bolt it without wry faces in one shape, while they cannot endure even the smell of it in another. "An Earnest Clergyman" admits that he is in the habit of telling people certain things which he does not believe, but he has no great fancy for deceiving himself; "Cantab" must, I fear, deceive himself before he can tolerate the notion of deceiving other people. For my own part I prefer to be deceived by one who does not deceive himself, rather than by one who does, for the first will know better when to stop; he will not commonly deceive me more than he can help. As for the other! If he does not know how to invest his own thoughts safely, he will invest mine still worse. He will hold God's most precious gift of falsehood too cheap; he has come by it too easily; cheaply come cheaply go will be his maxim. The good liar should be the converse of the poet; he should be made, not born.

It is not loss of confidence in a man's strict adherence to the letter of truth that shakes my confidence in him. I know what I do myself, and what I must lose all social elasticity if I

<sup>1</sup> From *The Examiner*, 8th March 1879.

## *A Clergyman's Doubts*

were not to do. Turning for moral guidance to my cousins the lower animals—whose unsophisticated instinct proclaims what God has taught them with a directness we may sometimes study—I find the plover lying when she reads us truly, and knowing that we shall hit her if we think her to be down, lures us from her young ones under the fiction of a broken wing. Is God angry, think you, with this pretty deviation from the letter of strict accuracy? or was it not He who whispered to her to tell the falsehood—to tell it with a circumstance, without conscientious scruples, and not once only, but to make a practice of it, so as to be a habitual liar for at least six weeks in the year? I imagine so. When I was young I used to read in good books that it was God who taught the bird to make her nest, and if so, He probably taught each species the other domestic arrangements which should be best suited to it. Or did the nest-building information come from God, and was there an evil one among the birds also who taught them to steer clear of pedantry? Then there is the spider—an ugly insect—can anything be meaner than that web which naturalists extol as such a marvel of Providential ingenuity?

Ingenuity! The word reeks with lying. Once on a summer afternoon in a distant country I met one of those orchids whose main idea consists in the imitation of a fly; this lie they dispose so plausibly upon their petals that other flies which would steal their honey leave them unmolested. Watching intently, and keeping very still, methought I heard this person speaking to the offspring which she felt within her, though I saw them not. "My children," she exclaimed, "I must soon leave you; think upon the fly, my loved ones; make it look as terrible as possible; cling to this thought in your passage through life, for it is the one thing needful—once lose sight of it and you are lost!" Over and over again she sang this burden in a small, still voice, and so I left her. Then straightway I came upon some butterflies, whose profession it was to pretend to believe in all manner of vital truths which in their inner practice they

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rejected; thus pretending to be certain other and hateful butterflies which no bird will eat by reason of their abominable smell, these cunning ones conceal their own sweetness, and live long in the land, and see good days. Think of that, O Earnest Clergyman, my friend! No. Lying is like Nature; you may expel her with a fork, but she will always come back again. It is like the poor, we must have it always with us; the question is, How much, when, where, and to whom, under what circumstances is lying right? For once admit that a plover may pretend to have a broken wing and yet be without sin if she have pretended well enough, and the thin end of the wedge has been introduced, so that there is no more saying that we must never lie.

It is not, then, the discovery that a man has the power to lie that shakes my confidence in him; it is loss of confidence in his mendacity that I find it impossible to get over. I forgive him for telling me lies, but I cannot forgive him for not telling me the same lies, or nearly so, about the same things. This shows he has a slipshod memory, which is unpardonable, or else that he tells so many lies that he finds it impossible to remember all of them, and this is like having too many of the poor always with us. The plover and the spider have each of them their stock of half a dozen lies or so, which we may expect them to tell when occasion arises; they are plausible and consistent, but we know when to have them; otherwise, if they were liable, like self-deceivers, to spring mines upon us in unexpected places, man would soon make it his business to reform them—not from within, but from without.

And now it is time I came to the drift of my letter, which is that if “An Earnest Clergyman” has not cheated himself into thinking he is telling the truth, he will do no great harm by stopping where he is; do not let him make too much fuss about trifles; the solemnity of the truths which he professes to uphold is very doubtful; there is a tacit consent that it exists more on paper than in reality; if he is a man of any tact, he can say all he is compelled to say, and do all the

## A Clergyman's Doubts

Church requires of him—like a gentleman, with neither undue slovenliness nor undue unction—yet it shall be perfectly plain to all his parishioners who are worth considering, that he is acting as a mouthpiece, and that his words are to be taken as spoken dramatically. As for the unimaginative, they are as children; they cannot and should not be taken into account. Men must live as they must write or act—for a certain average standard which each must guess at for himself as best he can; those who are above this standard he cannot reach; those, again, who are below it must be so at their own risk. Pilate did well when he would not stay for an answer to his question *What is truth?* for there is no such thing, apart from the sayer and the sayee; there is that is only in Nature which brings it to pass that if the sayer be a man with any stuff in him he may lie and lie and lie all the day long, and he will be no more false to any man than the sun will shine by night. His lies become truths as they pass into the hearer's soul. On the other hand, the truths of the self-deceiver turn sour while yet in his mouth, like quails in the wilderness of Sinai. How this is, or why it is so, I know not, but that the Lord hath mercy on whom He will have mercy, and whom He willeth He hardeneth, and that the bad man can do no right, and the good no wrong.

A great French writer has said that the mainspring of our existence does not lie in those veins and nerves and arteries which have been described with so much care—these are but its masks and mouthpieces through which it acts, but behind which it is for ever hidden; so in like manner the faiths and formulae of a Church may be as its bones and animal mechanism, but they are not the life of the Church (which is something that cannot be holden in words), and one should know how to put them off, yet put them off gracefully, if they wish to come too prominently forward. Do not let “An Earnest Clergyman” take things too much *au sérieux*. He seems to be fairly contented where he is; let him take the word of one who is old enough to be his father; that if he has a talent for conscientious scruples he will find



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plenty of scope for them in other professions as well as in the Church. I, for aught he knows, may be a doctor, and I might tell my own story; or I may be a barrister, and have found it my duty to win a case which I thought a very poor one, whereby others whose circumstances were sufficiently pitiable lost their all—yet barristers do not write to the newspapers to air their poor consciences in broad daylight. Why should an earnest (I hate the word) clergyman do so? I hope he is not one of those who enjoy the luxury of woe. Any way, I would give him a last word or two of fatherly advice.

Men may settle small things for themselves, as what they will have for dinner or where they will spend the vacation; but the great ones—such as the choice of a profession, of the part of England they will live in, whether they will marry or no—they had better leave the force of circumstances to settle for them; if they prefer the phraseology, as I do myself, let them leave these matters to God. When He has arranged things for them, do not let them be in too great a hurry to upset His arrangement in a tiff. If they do not like their present, and see another opening suggesting itself easily and naturally, let them take that as a sign that they make a change; otherwise let them see to it that they do not leave the frying-pan for the fire. A man finding himself in the field of a profession, should do as cows do when they are put into a field of grass. They do not like any field: they like the open prairie of their ancestors. They walk, however, all round their new abode, surveying the hedges and gates with much interest. If there is a gap in any hedge they will commonly go through it at once, otherwise they will resign themselves contentedly enough to the task of feeding.

I am, Sir, one who thinks he knows a thing or two about

ETHICS.

# A Clergyman's Doubts

7

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE EXAMINER" <sup>1</sup>

SIR, If your correspondent "Oxoniensis" will read my last letter to you again, he will see that my remarks were not intended to apply to those sceptics who deliberately *adopt* the clerical profession because it is "an easy and gentlemanly career in life." I should condemn such conduct quite as strongly as he does. My letter treated of those who, having been ordained as sincere believers in the Church's doctrines, and having since contracted the responsibility of maintaining a family, become convinced that those doctrines are untrue. The distinction should be obvious enough. What similarity of condition exists between a strong young man who has only himself to work for, and a man past the prime of life who has a family dependent on his income, and for whom a change of profession is out of the question?

In common with most other people, your correspondent assumes that if Christianity is not "the revelation of all truth," it must necessarily be "a gigantic imposition on mankind." This assumption appears to me altogether baseless. Why is the principle of *falsum in uno, falsum in omnibus* admissible in religion any more than in the other departments of human thought? If Christianity does not contain *all* truth, must we conclude that it contains *no* truth? If it is not as certain as a proposition of Euclid, is it necessarily as absurd as primitive fetishism? If, for instance, I reject the doctrine of the Atonement, what hinders me from holding up, so far as in me lies, the ideal of conduct exemplified in the life of Christ?

The teaching of the Church is partly dogmatic and partly practical. It asserts matters of fact, and enjoins a course of action in reference to them. This course of action consists in following the ideal above referred to, and I see no reason why a man should be incapacitated for leading others to

<sup>1</sup> From *The Examiner*, 8th March 1879.

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follow it by disbelief of the dogmas with which it is historically connected. The sceptical clergyman is not called upon to *contradict* the evidence for these doctrines; it is sufficient for him to let it alone. He may still work on the practical or moral side of the Church's teaching. All virtuous men co-operate to this extent, however their theories of human destiny may conflict; and I maintain that the sceptical clergyman, whose energies are concentrated on this one side, has advantages of leisure, and probably of habits of thought, which the dogmatic believer does not commonly share. These considerations I submit as a set-off to the moral deterioration inseparable from all systematic concealment of convictions. To me it seems supremely important that men who may do much to improve the condition of the Church, and who may still assist in a large part of its work, should not be depressed by the feeling that they have no other alternative than beggary or fraud. When we cannot attain to the rare excellences of heroic self-abnegation, our best remaining course is to do what is possible, by means of less dazzling qualities, towards diminishing the evil to be seen on all sides.

I am, Sir, etc.,

CANTAB.

8

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE EXAMINER"<sup>1</sup>

SIR, I hope from the importance of the subject that you will allow me briefly to reply to "Cantab's" last letter.

If he will do me the favour to read my letter to you again, he will see that I included in my condemnation with him who enters, the man who remains in the Church a sceptic. I entirely fail to see that any such moral distinction, as "Cantab" asserts, exists between the man who deliberately enters the Church a sceptic, and the man who, having become a sceptic since ordination, continues nevertheless to receive the wages and perform the offices of the Church; both are

<sup>1</sup> From *The Examiner*, 15th March 1879.

## A Clergyman's Doubts

equally guilty of dishonesty. In the case of "An Earnest Clergyman," the awful alternative of exposing those dependent upon him to want may excuse the dishonesty, and this is, I presume, what "Cantab" really means to convey; it cannot make it any the less existent.

"Cantab" proceeds to the assertion that my application of *falsum in uno, falsum in omnibus*, to Christianity is fallacious. I deny it. He is speaking and thinking of Christianity merely as a human system, and in relation to its human bearing. I spoke of it as the average lot of professing Christians regard it, as a revelation made by the Deity to man. In all human systems we are prepared and expect to find falsehood and error mixed with truth, and so we do not reject the whole because of the false detail. That which is of God can assuredly not be false in any or the smallest particular. And I repeat that either Christianity is the revelation of all truth, or it is, *so far as its supernatural claims go* (the saving clause which "Cantab" in quoting me curiously enough ignores, though the whole statement depends upon it), a gigantic imposition on mankind. I am sorry that "Cantab" persists in his apology for the sceptical clergyman's position, his elaborate analysis of which only serves, to my mind, the more clearly to reveal it as one which no honourable man would consent to occupy. I should be the last to underrate that which Christianity has done for the good and progress of mankind; but if the common view of Christianity, as a supernatural revelation, is false, assuredly no good purpose can be served by keeping up that view, and the man who is convinced of this, if he is too apathetic in the cause of truth to feel disposed to the active propagation of his conviction, is bound at least to keep himself from even a passive co-operation with those whom he believes to be holding up a miserable falsehood. Of all frauds, religious fraud is the worst, and the true man will have nothing to do with it. "It is better" (not only for the individual man, but for the whole human race) "to believe there is no God at all than to believe of Him falsely."

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Your correspondent "Ethics" says there is no such thing as truth. What he means, of course, is that truth is present in an ever-variable guise; that it cannot be chained down to dogma, religious, political, or ethical, as men in their desire to place a goal to their investigations have cheated themselves into believing; but that it is by the successive processes of belief and scepticism that mankind advances in the knowledge of the truth. But "Ethics" has discovered this to little purpose if he can bring himself to laugh at the "conscientious scruples" of "An Earnest Clergyman." The true philosopher will not hide his light under a bushel; still less will he, in the knowledge of the truth, be indifferent to others remaining in error. I consider, and I am confident the majority of your readers will agree with me, that "An Earnest Clergyman" is far in advance of the philosophy of "Ethics" and "Cantab," because, believing he has found the truth, he is unable to reconcile himself to, and is unhappy in a passive connivance with, that which he holds as falsehood. A great writer has truly remarked, "There is a conspicuous want of *manliness*, not only in the bodily, but the mental character of our age, a pervading timidity in declaring our real convictions on the most important matters, especially religion, which is, as far as open and candid discussion is concerned, an almost interdicted subject amongst us. The fear of the opinion of others is the guiding sentiment in our society, and we are afraid of departing one step from the beaten track of conventionalism, for fear of incurring the odium of our neighbours."

I fear, Sir, that the views put forward by such able writers as "Ethics" and "Cantab," in which earnestness is ridiculed and the sacrifice of conviction to expediency advocated, tend to foster and keep up this miserable mental slavery amongst us, and so, indirectly, the "moral deterioration" inseparable from it.

I remain, Sir, your obedient servant,

OXONIENSIS.

Oxford, March 12th.

# A Clergyman's Doubts

9

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE EXAMINER" <sup>1</sup>

SIR, The last letter of your correspondent "Oxoniensis" betrays so singular a misapprehension of my principles, that I venture once more to take up a corner of your space by pointing out wherein I conceive his fallacies to consist. I entirely agree with your correspondent in his estimate of the importance of the question at issue; and this appears to be the full extent of the common ground between us.

It was evident that in his first letter "Oxoniensis" included in wholesale condemnation both "him who enters" and "the man who remains in the Church a sceptic"; and my contention obviously was that such condemnation is too indiscriminate. This is now met by the assertion that both classes of sceptical clergymen are "equally guilty of dishonesty." But the very next sentence states that, in the case of "An Earnest Clergyman," the "awful alternative of exposing those dependent on him to want may *excuse the dishonesty*." So that while there is no "moral distinction" between the two classes, and both are "equally guilty of dishonesty," yet for the one class circumstances create an excuse, and for the other they do not! These two consecutive sentences are inconsistent, unless the phrase "equally guilty" is intended to express identity in kind, and not mere equality in degree. But then what is meant by the assertion in your correspondent's first letter that "no condemnation can be too strong" for *either* class?

But "excuse"! What does the word mean? Something which does not affect the dishonesty of an action, or something which makes it less? In the former case the word has no meaning. In the latter my distinction is admitted. Let it be noted that this distinction is not fairly represented by your correspondent. Nothing was ever said about the difference between "the man who deliberately enters the Church

<sup>1</sup> From *The Examiner*, 22nd March 1879.

## *Collected Essays*

a sceptic and the man who, having become a sceptic since ordination, continues nevertheless to receive the wages and perform the offices of the Church." The "saving clause," on which the whole statement depends, was thus expressed: "A man, past the prime of life, who has a family dependent on his exertions, and for whom a change of profession is out of the question." These words describe the position of "An Earnest Clergyman," and I was not arguing about any other.

An "excuse" is that which, for whatever reason, diminishes the guilt of an offence. All moralists use the word in this sense, and so does the Law of England. For some actions, provocation is an excuse. For others, extreme destitution is an excuse. Those situated as "An Earnest Clergyman" are excused by reason of the deterrent influence of domestic affection. In all these cases, the motives which would otherwise lead to virtuous action are counteracted by those other motives which result from the weakness of our mental constitution.

Now the conceptions of Christianity contrasted by your correspondent are not mutually exclusive. They are, in fact, one and the same. The view of Christianity as "a revelation made by God to man" is identical with the view of it "in relation to its human bearing." What is a revelation but the expression of a relation between the Deity and mankind? My thesis is this: The common practice of assuming that the current doctrines of Christianity must be either wholly true or wholly false is irrational. In consequence, whoever rejects the supernatural side of the Church's teaching is not necessarily unfit to assist that teaching on its practical or the moral side. And to this it is objected that "what is of God can assuredly not be false in any or the smallest particular." But my argument is not touched by this truism. The practical question is not what is "of God," but what we have reason to accept as such. No doubt that which is of God cannot be otherwise than true—in itself. But are we to conclude that it is all of equal certainty to us? Is there exactly the same de-

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gree of evidence for all the articles of the Christian creed? On the contrary, it depends upon the clearness with which these doctrines have respectively been made known to us, whether we are to accept this as true, that as false, and the other as doubtful. In like manner these doctrines, considered as a whole, obviously rest upon evidence of a totally different kind from that of the value of the moral system with which Christianity has been historically associated. The former depend mainly upon documentary evidence; the latter is attested by the experience of daily life.

It is easy for persons who are comfortably situated to say that a "true man" would invariably prefer death itself to dissembling his convictions. The superficial plausibility of such language is so apparent that I do not pretend to say that my views will commend themselves to the majority of your readers, or of any others. But those who recognize that morality is the concern of human beings with imperfect facilities and strong temptations, will not caricature these views as "ridiculing" earnestness, and advocating "the sacrifice of conviction to expediency." I might easily refute this astonishing charge by quoting passages from my former letters which distinctly affirm the "heroism" and "rare excellences" of those who sacrifice expediency to conviction. But my position may be made clearer by an illustration from history.

In the year 1600 Giordano Bruno was summoned before the Inquisition at Rome to answer for the alleged heresy of his scientific publications. In 1632 Galileo was arraigned on the same charge before the same tribunal. Bruno died nobly in the cause of scientific truth; Galileo recanted. The behaviour of the latter was not at all heroic, no doubt, and deserves no admiration. But does it deserve abuse? Does any rational person say that Galileo was no "true man," that he proved himself a liar and a coward? He proved himself to be no more than an ordinary mortal, unequal to an emergency which only extraordinary gifts could have met. If our conclusion involves any severer reproach than this,



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we necessarily rate the glorious martyrdom of Bruno nothing higher than the performance of a general duty. What praise does this merit at our hands? People are blamed for the non-fulfilment of general duties, but they are not commended for fulfilling them. But the heroes of humanity have reached a far higher eminence than is attainable by average men, and measurable by common standards. On no other grounds do they compel our veneration, and, on the other hand, conduct which does not fall below what can reasonably be expected from the average virtue and ability, is no fit subject for our censure.

And now, suppose that a clergyman in the position we are considering elects to resign his means of subsistence. Is it thought a sufficient account of the matter to remark that no "true man" would have done otherwise? Do we rest content with saying merely that he has done his duty? Nobody in his senses would speak of such conduct with the quiet indifference with which more ordinary moralities are regarded. It is not only for the sake of the reputation of great men that the only principle by which this distinction can be drawn should receive a general acceptance. It is also in the interests of ourselves, for whom it is important that we should not regard as commonplace men and actions that are exceptional.

I am, Sir, etc.,

CANTAB.

IO

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE EXAMINER" <sup>1</sup>

SIR, Three lines to express to "Oxoniensis" through yourself my complete sympathy with and respect for his admirable letter in your last issue. I have much to do, and have not my own letter at hand; but did I laugh at the conscientious scruples of an "Earnest Clergyman"? I did not mean

<sup>1</sup> From *The Examiner*, 22nd March 1879.

## *A Clergyman's Doubts*

to do so. Is there not a laughter which is no laughter? Nor, I think, did I "ridicule earnestness." I said I hated the word "earnest," which I do with all my heart. As for advocating sacrifice of conviction to expediency—to a sufficient expediency—I do advocate this, and so I am very sure would "Oxoniensis" himself. Again, I did not say there is no such thing as truth. I said there was no such thing as truth *apart from the sayer and the sayee*. "I cannot," said Burke, near the beginning of his *Reflections on the French Revolution*, "stand forward and give praise or blame to anything which relates to human actions, and human concerns, on a simple view of the object, as it stands stripped of every relation, in all the nakedness and solitude of metaphysical abstraction." This passage was in my mind when I wrote. "Oxoniensis's" letter is, nevertheless, very much to my liking.

ETH'CS.

### II

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE EXAMINER"<sup>1</sup>

SIR, I am as sorry as "Oxoniensis" to read much that has been written in the discussion upon "A Clergyman's Doubts." It might be pretty well summed up in a miserable plea that "a man must live," which, I thought, had been sufficiently demolished by the reply of a really honest man—made in all good faith—that "he could not see the necessity of that at all." But in confounding the original parson and "Cantab" with "Ethics," our Oxford friend seems to me unjust to the latter. "Ethics" appears rather to have suggested—perhaps not in the best way—an important question having intimate relation to the previous discussion, and which may be profitably followed up. Suffer me then to ask how far the collective conscience of humanity—or to be more precise, let us say even of Christian humanity—does endorse the

<sup>1</sup> From *The Examiner*, 22nd March 1879.

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proposition that right and wrong are absolute things, entirely independent of limitations and circumstances, or, in other words, of expediency. Two simple illustrations will suffice me.

Everyone who has had much to do with children knows the curiosity which the advent of a "new baby" is apt to awaken, and the extremely inconvenient character of the questions which are asked as to the causes and manner of such new arrivals. They are a commonplace of nursery history, and often as amusing as they are embarrassing. But how about the answers to them? What are they, strictly speaking; and what becomes of absolute truth in reference to them? Observe, we are not here discussing the relative claims of delicacy and truth; neither are we here debating whether it might or might not be better to place a fuller trust in the innocence of childhood. Perhaps a noble simplicity might in the end be better for all concerned; perhaps not; much might be said on both sides of that question. My present position is solely this; that those very people who, as a class, are the most strenuous advocates of "absolute truth" are precisely those who in the case supposed most commonly evade it. Grant that the claims of delicacy are paramount; we still want to know *how* they harmonize their practice with their avowed rule that any perversion or concealment of truth is wrong under *all* circumstances.

But we must put another case, because there are many who would evade the first by admitting that, even in the case supposed, perfect frankness was the right course to pursue. Such a man once told me that any deceit, practised upon any being, was wrong. I asked him expressly whether he made no exceptions—such, for instance, as when the deceived party was so ignorant, or inferior, as never to be conscious of the deception. On the contrary, he maintained that the more inferior the "injured" party, as he called it, the greater the wrong. Good again. But what, then, shall we say of poor little fishes deceived by an artfully-concealed hook, or animals caught in pitfalls and traps, and countless others

## *A Clergyman's Doubts*

cheated and deceived in ways too numerous to mention? I know what will be said, Is a man to starve rather than a fish be deceived by a baited hook? etc. But still, what becomes of our principle of absolute truthfulness? Is not the justification solely rested, as before, upon considerations of *relative* moral value, or, in other words, of Expediency (in its true sense), with which "absolute" truth could have nothing to do?

I do not ask these questions because I have no answers to them: every man to whom they occur must frame some answers to himself, if only provisional. And I need hardly remark that they do not even touch the great question of an Absolute Truth and Goodness—it is a bad day for any of us when we lose our faith in *that*. But they do suggest questions which may profitably be pondered, of how far our own apprehension of the Absolute can extend, and whether our moral faculties are not at present limited as well as our physical. I say they may profitably be considered, for they are by no means barren and interminable like those concerning necessity and free-will, but touch actual, daily conduct very nearly. Their bearing on practical politics does not need pointing out. And their bearing on more than one question of theology—but especially on the nature and extent of "absolute" truth possible in even a genuine Divine revelation to finite creatures, apart from their own mental and moral condition—will be very obvious on reflection.

Yours, etc.,

LEWIS WRIGHT.

March 17.

12

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE EXAMINER" <sup>1</sup>

SIR, It would be a great pity that the interesting discussion which has been going on in your columns should come down to an unprofitable contest about words and thin shades of

<sup>1</sup> From *The Examiner*, 29th March 1879.

## Collected Essays

meaning between myself and "Cantab," for there is thus danger of the original question being lost sight of.

Relative to that question, certainly to my thinking both classes of the sceptical clergyman—both he who enters, and he who (whatever his circumstances) remains in the Church a sceptic—are, speaking absolutely, equally guilty of dishonesty, and my admitting, speaking relatively, that peculiar circumstances create an excuse for "An Earnest Clergyman," does not affect the former statement.

"Cantab" says: "The practical question is not what is of God, but what we have reason to accept as such," and follows this up by asking if there is the same evidence for all the Articles of the Christian Creed. Now it appears to me that the Articles of the Christian Creed depend upon one another, and surely, if we accept any of them at all, we must accept the whole Christian scheme, and *vice versa*. Taking the great fundamental doctrines upon which the supernatural claims of Christianity are based, the Incarnation, the Atonement, the Resurrection and Ascension, to what purpose can we believe one of these doctrines and reject another or others? "Cantab," however, talks as if the dogmas of Christianity were *numerous*, and admitted of individual choice and rejection. It seems to me that if a man has reason to believe any one of the great dogmas of Christianity, he has not only reason, but is virtually compelled, to believe the others, so entirely do they depend upon and dovetail into one another, and *vice versa*. And "Cantab's" view, which practically amounts to the assertion that Christianity may be partly of God, partly of man, or, to state it another way, the joint product of man's invention and God's revelation, is, I maintain, the irrational one, and not mine—that it is either the one or the other.

When "Cantab" remarks that the "superficial plausibility" of my language is so apparent that he "does not pretend to say that *his* views will recommend themselves to the majority of your readers," he is not very polite to them. I do not think, Sir, there are many amongst your readers who

## A Clergyman's Doubts

cannot detect the "superficial plausibility" of an argument when such exists. But I must deny that there is necessarily any plausibility in the assertion that the true man would prefer death to dissembling his convictions. I do not say that true men are the rule. I believe that a true man is the exception, but it does not follow because he is the exception that there is any plausibility in statements of how he will act when we do come across him. And though "Cantab's" sarcastic observation—that it is "easy for persons comfortably situated to say, etc."—is very good, he will allow me to point out that the fact of my situation cannot affect the truth or falsehood of my description of what the true man would do when brought to the test.

"Cantab" instances the recantation of Galileo when arraigned before the Inquisition, and asks whether his behaviour deserves abuse. Well, for my part, I should certainly never abuse it, because I regret to say I entertain the uncomfortable conviction that under such circumstances I should have acted in the same way; and as regards the questions whether the expediency was sufficient for justification, and whether he was guilty of cowardice or not—*tot homines, tot sententiae*. But I certainly cannot accord him the exceptional title of "true man," inasmuch as he was untrue to his conviction—sensibly so, perhaps, under the circumstances, but none the less untrue. A man cannot (to borrow a homely truism) eat his cake and have it too; and if we are to call Galileo a "true man," what honour does the title confer on Bruno and his fellow-martyrs of history, who faced the terrors of death for what they held as truth? What I condemn is the sacrifice of conviction in the matter of religion to expediency in the daily life of the present day, and that, too, most especially in a clergyman, who I maintain is, from his peculiar position, bound to honesty in the matter. I took exception, in the first instance, to the laying down as a general principle (which it appeared to me "Cantab" in his first letter to you did) that there is or can be a legitimate sphere of action in the Church for the man who can appreciate the moral though

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not the dogmatic side of the Church's teaching; or, to state it another way, that a man can honourably receive the wages of the Church while false to his ordination vows, false to his fellow-men, false to himself. Against this view I write, and still write; and though I admit that in "An Earnest Clergyman's" case circumstances excuse the dishonesty of his miserable position, I certainly cannot accord him, while he remains in that position, the exceptional title of "true man." "Cantab" apparently thinks this very cruel of me, but I know that "An Earnest Clergyman" will not think so, for he has shown us in his letters that he has too fine a moral perception.

To sum up, I would add that I do not write as a champion of dogmatic orthodoxy: I believe the true origin of the supernatural claims of Christianity is to be found in the superstitious worship accorded a great intellect in a dark age, and in the enthusiasm of the first converts to a noble philosophy. But if I do not hold the popular view of our religion, I appreciate, I hope, as really as the most orthodox, the principles of truth and morality; and therefore it is that I have written to protest against the attempt (as I conceived it) to represent the sceptical clergyman's position as one possible with those principles.

But as far as orthodoxy goes, the fact is, our religious, and so to a large extent, as being intimately bound up with it, our moral and social systems are still full of error; and we are at the present time in a state of transition. Men's minds are at length waking up to a vigorous rejection of the false twaddle that has been invented and perpetuated in the sacred name of religion. Well may we exclaim, O religion! how many blasphemies have been created in thy fair name! The degrading notion of man, entertained by those who can and will recognize in the human heart nothing but evil; the blasphemous view of the Deity according to which the good God is made to appear as if He was a malignant spirit, subject to caprice, ever tempting and punishing His creatures, to be propitiated by voluntary suffering and an unnatural

## *A Clergyman's Doubts*

ascetism; the "withering" doctrines of Hell and Damnation—the beliefs, I say, which have propagated these and similar puerilities, and so permeated our moral and social systems with false and morbid principles, are dying fast—dying hard, it may be, but none the less inevitably, as surely as all the products of superstition and ignorance which have flourished in the childhood of our race will eventually die. All I urge is, let us in this eventful epoch of the world's history be honest and sincere, and quit us like men—yea, and like true men. Don't let us be indifferent or half-hearted in the cause of truth, and don't let us, in religion at least, sacrifice conviction to expediency; for we cannot now be tortured or put to death for our opinions, and the age of bigotry and intolerance is, happily, passing away for ever! "We cannot all invent new truths, but we can all do something towards making what we believe to be truth shine a little brighter, so that sincerity and honesty are of the first importance." And if the common view of Christianity is false, don't let us therefore erroneously conclude that Christianity itself, and all that we love and reverence in Christianity, must fall along with that view; but let us, as apostles of the truth, strive to show the world at large that the noble sentiments comprehended in the teaching of Jesus Christ—self-sacrifice, self-discipline, universal love—stand in no need of the vulgar exaggerations of the supernatural for their enchantment, neither depend upon them; but that for and of themselves they will live in the hearts and be practised in the lives of the good and noble everywhere and for ever!

I am, Sir, your obedient servant,

OXONIENSIS.

London, March 26.



# Collected Essays

13

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE EXAMINER"<sup>1</sup>

SIR, As you seem inclined to insert correspondence on ethical subjects, I send you the enclosed lines, written some little time ago, which, I think, carry the matter in one direction as far as it can well be carried. Looking at the lines again, I find them much like the last six inches of a very long line of railway. There is no part of the road so ugly, so little travelled over, or so useless, generally; but they are one end, at any rate, of a very long thing. The lines are as follows:

## THE RIGHTEOUS MAN

### I

The righteous man will rob none but the defenceless,  
Whatsoever can reckon with him he will neither plunder  
nor kill;  
He will steal an egg from a hen, or a lamb from an ewe,  
For his sheep and his hens cannot reckon with him here-  
after—  
They live not in any odour of defencefulness;  
Therefore right is with the righteous man, and he taketh  
advantage righteously,  
Praising God and plundering.

### II

The righteous man will enslave his horse and his dog,  
Making them serve him for their bare keep, and for nothing  
further,  
Shooting them, selling them for vivisection, when they can  
no longer profit him,  
Backbiting them and beating them if they fail to please him;

<sup>1</sup> From *The Examiner*, 5th April 1879.

## *A Clergyman's Doubts*

For his horse and his dog can bring no action for damages,  
Wherefore, then, should he not enslave them, shoot them,  
sell them for vivisection?

### III

But the righteous man will not plunder the defenceful,  
Not if he be alone and unarmed, for his conscience will  
smite him;  
He will not rob a she-bear of her cubs, nor an eagle of her  
eaglets  
Unless he have a rifle to purge him from the fear of sin.  
Then may he shoot rejoicing in innocency, from ambush or  
safe distance,  
Or he will beguile them, lay poison for them, keep no faith  
with them;  
For what faith is there with that which cannot reckon here-  
after,  
Neither by itself, nor by another, nor by any residuum of ill  
consequences?  
Surely, where weakness is utter, honour ceaseth. :

### IV

Nay, I will do what is right in the eyes of him who can harm  
me,  
And not in those of him who cannot call me to account.  
Therefore, yield me up thy pretty wings, O humming-bird!  
Sing for me in a prison, O lark!  
Pay me thy rent, O widow! for it is mine;  
Where there is reckoning there is sin,  
And where there is no reckoning, sin is not.

X.Y.Z.

## Collected Essays

SIR,<sup>1</sup> I did not intend again inflicting myself upon your readers, but am unwilling to let the correspondence rest exactly where "Cantab" and "Oxoniensis" have left it. I cannot think that the clergyman who, like myself, rejects the miraculous element of Christianity should take things as easily as "Cantab" appears to expect of him. I hardly know what is meant by insisting on the moral teaching of the Church, unless such moral teaching only is intended as is independent of sanction from the Church, and is based upon the law of the land and the common conscience of the country. Nothing, again, will drive it into me that I am not in a false position, of which the best must be made, but the best of which is still far from satisfactory; nor can I doubt that it is the duty of teachers to put what has been said against the orthodox view, as well as the arguments in support of it, more openly before their pupils than they now deem it incumbent upon them to do. I agree heartily with "Oxoniensis" that there is a moral and intellectual cowardice prevalent, which bodes ill for the future of that society in which it may be observed—sapping, as it does, more surely perhaps than flagrant vice, all vigour and manliness of speech and dealing.

On the other hand, can there be any doubt that, for some men and under certain circumstances, keeping to a false position and making the best of it is a truer and therefore higher course than abandoning it in disgust? I incline to agree with your correspondent "Ethics" that he who does not play fast and loose with himself, will play no faster and looser with other people than he can reasonably help; and in practice I find no difficulty in so letting my real opinions be known among my parishioners as to be essentially unreserved, and yet at the same time, in using such reserve as to let my opinions be felt rather than expressed. I find practically that no one is shocked or offended, and that I can

<sup>1</sup> From *The Examiner*, 19th April 1879.

## *A Clergyman's Doubts*

say all I wish to say, though rarely putting any part of it into words.

This is no small gain. Let me repeat that nothing would have induced me to put myself in such a position with my eyes open, but, being in it, I cannot be blind to the usefulness of those who serve to soften the shock of changes which must inevitably come. All shocks—stronger than those slight ones, without which there would be neither consciousness nor life—are wastes of power. There was an article on “Rowing Styles” in the *Times* of last week, the following extract from which occurs to me as no less applicable to morals than to physics. It runs:

“To a weight of 5 kilos (about 11 lb.) a string is attached by which the weight can be lifted, but not much more. Then the experimenter tries to lift the weight rapidly with the string, which breaks without moving the weight, while the fingers are more or less hurt by the sudden shock. If, now, a cord of equal strength but slightly elastic is substituted, the experiment ends differently. The sudden effect of elevation is transformed into a more prolonged action, and the weight is raised without bruising the fingers or breaking the cord.”  
—*Times*, 5th April 1879.

Now, Sir, surely, being men, and having to deal with other men, we should be guided chiefly by our observation of what course is followed by what effect, and by our desire to bring those who think what we believe to be wrong, to a comprehension of what we believe to be the truth, with the smallest possible shock. I observe that if I act in one way—the way on which the moral teaching of my childhood insisted—I produce no good effect, but that pain and mischief certainly follow both to myself and to those on whom I have been operating. If, on the contrary, I take a certain other course, which the more child-like conscience would condemn, I gain my end with no evil following that I can detect after the most careful scrutiny. Has the rest of my early teaching, I ask myself, proved so final—has the moral teaching of any age proved so ultimately unimprovable—

## *Collected Essays*

that I am to shut my eyes to what I see, and hold fast to bare first principles? Is not the evidence of my own senses the revelation which has been more especially addressed to myself? Is it not God's message to *me*? Is not life, and will not life always, until it becomes as fixed and unconscious as the action of gravity or chemical affinities, be an art rather than a science? It has been said, not long since, that there is something of an elementary nature in the very word "principles," as though they were a good skeleton and framework, but no complete structure. I am sure, Sir, that this view of them is more moral than that which would strive to make them into rules of conduct as inelastic as the measurement whereby a machine can be made true to pattern.

The fixity of the most fixed things is relative, not absolute. The centres of the universe and of this earth, the boundaries of land and sea, the forms of life, and hence the consciences of those forms, are known to be in a state of perpetual flux. To such flux, therefore, our theories must adapt themselves, if they are not from time to time to suffer disruption and revolution.

In morals we are now as children who are beginning to understand that the hour-hand of the moral dial moves, though with a slower movement than our eyes can detect. To deny this is to deny those truths which man must bow down to as to the Almighty; but, at the same time, to admit them is to cut oneself adrift for ever from an absolute and immutable standard of right and wrong. I maintain that in the present state of our knowledge he who adopts a shifting standard of morals, making it, nevertheless, as little shifting as he can, takes at once the more manly and more arduous view of his position and responsibilities. I believe, also, that this very question whether morals are to be made to rest on a basis which shall shift as man's needs shift, according to the best ascertainable opinion concerning those needs, is not one merely for hairsplitters and casuists, but is the heart of the contention between the Church of Rome and Rationalism.

I look upon my position, then, as one in which it has

## *A Clergyman's Doubts*

pleased those unseen and complicated forces which for simplicity's sake I personify, and to which I bow as to God, to place me. Horrible as it at one time seemed, I am now satisfied that I should have been fighting against God, rather than with Him, if I had left it. Granted I may have deceived myself. "Oxoniensis" may say, "He is self-blinded: he has been untrue to his first moral instinct, and is reaping the reward in a blunter sense of right and wrong." Should he say so, I shall be the last person to complain of him, for I have said such words too often to myself to wonder at another's saying them. But they would not, I believe—or, perhaps, better, I trust—be true. Slowly and with more introspection than I approve of (for a stronger man would have felt the truth by instinct, and have needed less exercise of reason, so that I know no respect in which I so much distrust my conclusion as in that of the trouble it has taken me to reach it), I have put behind me those whisperings of the Evil One, as that I should be bound by literalism, if graceful and kindly conduct point in another direction. I know now that the unseen hand which clutched me, and which, in spite of all my cries, builded my house for me on what I deemed the quicksand, was the hand of God dragging my house and me away from that siren-haunted rock from which "Oxoniensis" still thinks he catches a seraphic music. And as in bygone days I found what I had deemed to be the rock become quicksand under me, so by an irony of great mercy the quicksand has proved to be a rock.

To conclude, then: of your two correspondents, "Oxoniensis" seems to me to err on the side of requiring too inflexible a standard of conduct; while "Cantab," on the other hand, is content with one which is not rigid enough. I think most readers will feel that if "Oxoniensis" is allowed a moral standard of so unyielding a nature as he seems inclined to stand out for, it will drive him to conclusions from which he would be the first to draw back; and, on the other hand, that if "Cantab" allows a sceptical clergyman to play so fast and loose with words as to administer the Sacraments

## Collected Essays

in church without feeling bitter with himself, and with those who kept him in the dark on points in respect of which they should have given him warning (as I myself, in my own way, warn all whom I can reach)—then it seems as though truth and honour come to be words with but little meaning.

I am, Sir, yours faithfully,

AN EARNEST CLERGYMAN.

### 15

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE EXAMINER"<sup>1</sup>

SIR, I have just read several letters from an "Earnest Clergyman" in your paper. I cannot fully express how much I sympathize with them. I, too, am a clergyman. I was educated at one of the largest public schools in England, where thirty-five years ago all the Saints' days were observed, if attending chapel and enjoying a holiday can be called an observance. I was well drilled in the Greek Testament, and I need hardly say that I never heard a doubt expressed on the genuineness of any part of either the Old or New Testament. I was also naturally disposed to religion, even as a boy. When I was eighteen years old I went to Oxford, and there was no more regular attendant at chapel than myself. In my time (I am speaking of the Oxford of more than thirty years ago) there were several courses of lectures on the Prayer-Book and Church History. I attended all these lectures and took every opportunity of acquiring what is called religious knowledge. I may add that I passed through public school and University life with a decided reputation for steadiness and application. Up to the time I took my degree I never had a suspicion that any doubts had been seriously entertained of the authenticity of the Scriptures. Well, Sir, in due time, after two years of foreign travel, I

<sup>1</sup> From *The Examiner*, 10th May 1879.

## *A Clergyman's Doubts*

was ordained, and after a certain time passed as a curate, I was presented to a valuable living in an important and populous village. Here for more than fourteen years I devoted myself to preaching, visiting the sick, working the schools, and all the usual routine of a country clergyman. By degrees—how I cannot now say—doubts began to creep into my mind. Some pulsations of that great wave of thought which was beating so fiercely in Germany reached even the quiet English parsonage. These doubts, like the leaven in the parable, gradually spread, until my mind was thoroughly imbued with scepticism. I struggled to repress my doubts. I wrestled, as it were, with each sceptical thought. Can I express in adequate language the horror which I felt when I at last discovered that the building in which I was engaged as a workman rested on the most insecure foundations? With what different eyes did I then view that once to me sacred temple! The village church, the stately cathedral, which once spoke to me, as it were, out of every stone—no voice now of encouragement, no living words from the past to tell of victories won. No hope for the future! The mystic service, the mysterious entrance into the spiritual world by baptism, the sacred mystic sacramental rites, the solemn words of forgiveness, nay, of absolution to the sinner, the last solemn words of hope read over the grave, had now lost all their pith and meaning. Is there no pity for such an one as myself? Alas, from the Church there was none. The words of St. Paul rang out clear and decisive, and cut like a knife: "For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, if they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance . . . whose end is to be burned." Sir, I am writing the true history of my life. The Church has no compassion, but only swift destruction for the sceptic. The bishops are not more lenient than the Church, whilst the world only too generally views with ill-concealed contempt him who dares to think for himself on religion. Well, Sir, at forty years of



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age I resigned my living, I broke up my home, and I commenced, as it were, once more the battle of life. I then discovered how ill-suited a clergyman is to enter any profession or business. Now, why I beg you to publish this letter is simply this. I wish to do to others what I so deeply regret no one ever did to me—I wish to warn the young, more especially those who are intending to take holy orders, that there is another side to the whole question of Christian theology than the one usually presented to them, and that the time to consider that question is before, not after ordination. I wish to save some from the mental torture which I have endured. If after reading the sceptical works of the present day a young man is still desirous of being ordained, I think that the whole Bench of Bishops would agree that such a man would make a better priest than if he entered on his duties ignorant of even the existence of such works. I shall feel glad to continue my story and to detail how by degrees I have become reconciled to my new position.

I remain, Sir, yours obediently,

E.D.

### 16

#### TO THE EDITOR OF "THE EXAMINER"<sup>1</sup>

SIR, Happening to take up the *Examiner* to-day in the house of a friend, I saw a letter from "E.D." describing the way in which he became a sceptic, and the consequences it entailed upon him. He writes, it would seem, principally to warn young men of what may possibly be in store for them if they become clergymen.

I entirely agree with him that it is high time such a warning should be sounded, for the number of those whose fortunes have been wrecked on the rock of Theology is increasing almost daily.

<sup>1</sup> From *The Examiner*, 17th May 1879:

## *A Clergyman's Doubts*

Like "E.D." I was once a clergyman, and happy in my duties; but having a mind desirous of the truth I could not refuse to examine the foundations of my belief, and I accordingly discovered, at the age of thirty-eight, that the Christian religion is not of supernatural origin. Of course I could not retain my position as a minister, and I therefore had to cast about for fresh occupation.

"E.D." says that when he left the Church he then discovered the difficulties that lie in the way of a clergyman obtaining other employment.

I, too, have experienced this.

In respect of many kinds of work I was prepared to encounter obstacles; but I may say I did not expect to find anything to prevent one's falling back upon teaching.

It appears, however, that outspokenness in questions of religion is fatal to one's prospects in this department. The heads of scholastic institutions, even where they themselves are confessedly of Broad Church proclivities, will take good care they do not employ anyone who, in candour of speech, passes the line drawn by discretion. Simplicity of speech in things theological seems to be the greatest of sins, though as followers of Jesus we are bound specially to cultivate it.

Earnestly would I join with "E.D." in exhorting young men thinking of orders to pause, or they may find themselves in evil case in after years.

I remain, etc.,

SOLLICITUS.



**LIFE AND HABIT, VOL. 2**



## INTRODUCTION

THE PUBLICATION OF *LIFE AND HABIT* IN 1877 (dated 1878) left Butler pullulating with postscripts. First, and chiefly, there was to be another book illustrating his theory and carrying it further. This he used to speak of as "Life and Habit, vol. 2," and for it he collected much material. But it made slow progress, being delayed by other work and especially by *Evolution, Old and New* (1879), and by *Unconscious Memory* (1880), which absorbed some of the material. The book itself, as sometimes happens with a projected volume, took the bit between its teeth and ran away with him, so that when at last it appeared in 1886 (dated 1887) with the title *Luck, or Cunning?* it was not what he had originally intended. He speaks of this in the preface; and, in the concluding chapter, he writes: "Such, however, as the book is, it must now go in the form into which it has grown almost more in spite of me than from *malice prepense* on my part." Nevertheless, it did use up some of the material he had collected for it, but there was a good deal left over among his papers. This ms. material, much of which belongs to the year 1885, I have had bound with the title which he gave to it, viz., "Life and Habit, vol. 2." It is clear that it was not intended to be published as he left it, with no editing. It consists of four Essays, followed by a collection of Notes. But there are various tentative notes, remarks, and suggestions scattered about. For instance, it begins thus:

### CHAPTER

#### *Contradictions in Terms*

"These are latent in every proposition and tend to become at once more perceptible and more inevitable with the increase of our knowledge."

That is all there is on the first page which is numbered 36. We turn over and come to:

"Additional Notes for the Contradiction in Terms chapter"

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followed by a hundred words or so about the amoeba. This page is numbered 37, and on the verso of page 36 are these words struck through:

### CHAPTER

#### *Contradictions in Terms*

"We can either unify or disjoin with equal show of reason.

"But in fact we must both unify and disjoin at one and the same time.

"It is in temper or charity that the strength of a philosopher lies."

We turn over again and come to page 38:

### CHAPTER IV

"I proceed with pleasure to another very different opponent."

"Professor Mivart's main objection," etc.

From which it appears that there must have been chapters 1, 2, and 3; he may have incorporated them into *Luck, or Cunning?* for we did not find them among his papers. On this page 38 begins what he has to say about Contradiction in Terms. It is in two parts. Part I concludes with what is evidently a peroration, as though he thought he had reached the conclusion of the whole matter. But he must have known that there can be no real conclusion to the discussion of such a matter as Contradiction in Terms. Anyhow, he then made an index to Part I.

We then come to what is evidently Part II, notwithstanding the peroration and the index. This is headed "Chapter v," and is followed by another index.

Then we have a page devoted to a half-title and a table of Contents. It reads thus:

## *Life and Habit, vol. 2*

### LIFE AND HABIT, VOL. 2

- " Chapt. v. Faith and Reason.
- „ VI. Convenience.
- „ VII. Life and Death.
- „ VIII. Protoplasm."

Which confirms the view that the ms. was intended to be used in writing "Life and Habit, vol. 2."

I have preserved these headings, except that I have up-pressed "Protoplasm" and included the substance of it, which is very short, in "Life and Death." The whole ms. concludes with fifty-three pages of Notes from which I have made a selection. The result is that we are now printing :

CONTRADICTION IN TERMS, 2 PARTS  
FAITH AND REASON  
CONVENIENCE  
LIFE AND DEATH  
A SELECTION FROM THE NOTES

The reader will see that the Notes are but sketchy, often not more than enough to identify them and to tell himself where to find them written out in full in what he calls "C.P. BK." This was the name which in early days he gave to his Note-Book, and he afterwards destroyed it; but before destroying it he had copied not merely these notes for "Life and Habit, vol. 2" but also the rest of its contents, amplifying and tersifying as he copied. This, with more re-copying, reconsidering, adding, and subtraction, grew into the five volumes of bound ms. Note-Books, and enough more for a sixth volume, which we found on his death. It was from these that I selected the published *Note-Books*. The notes which form the conclusion of this material for "Life and Habit, vol. 2," are thus intermediate between the "C.P. BK." and the final Note-Books. The "C.P. BK." must have been a thick volume, because some of the page references here run to numbers over 800; none of the final ms.



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Note-Books runs to so many as 300 pages. The fact that we have not the original "C.P. BK." to refer to sometimes makes the perusal of these intermediate notes tantalizing, e.g.:

"If on a summer afternoon in a subalpine inn, etc., 84."

One would like to know what came next on page 84 of that destroyed "C.P. BK." It might be possible by searching the final Note-Books to identify the note, but not for certain, especially if on being re-copied it did not preserve its opening words. Some of the notes from the "C.P. BK." are easily identifiable with those in the volumes he left. I did not have before me this collection of extracts from his "C.P. BK." when I was compiling the published *Note-Books*; but it ought to be borne in mind by anyone who may some day prepare a second selection from the ms. Note-Books.

The Notes begin with what I take to be a trial table of Contents for "Life and Habit, vol. 2." It is as follows:

- " A chapter on Unity.
  - " " " Design.
  - " " " Convenience.
  - " " " Consciousness.
  - " " " Mind and Matter.
  - " " " Continuity of Existence after Death.
  - " " " Knowing what gives us Pleasure.
  - " " " Individuality.
  - " " " The Physical Aspect of Death.
  - " " " The Sentimental Aspect of Death.
- Give the true date of the 1st volume."

I have no doubt that this last item, about the true date of the first volume, means that he is to make it clear that *Life and Habit*, although dated 1878, actually appeared on the 4th December 1877 (the day on which he attained forty-two years of age). He did not approve of the habit some publishers have of post-dating books which appear late in the year. It may have some commercial or advertising advantage, but it can be misleading, as he found at Varallo when

## *Life and Habit, vol. 2*

seeking information from books about the chapels there, and it raised difficulties when he wanted to settle the exact date at which a group of statues was first mentioned.

This allusion to *Life and Habit* as the first volume again confirms the view that all this ms. was intended to be used in "*Life and Habit, vol. 2.*" That he should have collected these notes specially for this purpose discords with the conclusion of his statement that he made his notes "under the impression that I may use them in my books, but I never do unless I happen to remember them at the right time." As, however, he did not write "*Life and Habit, vol. 2,*" or rather as it turned out so different from what he intended, we cannot make much of this. Also, if the discord had been pointed out to him, he would probably have declined to resolve it; he would have claimed it as illustrating the view he was insisting upon in these Essays; he would have said with Walt Whitman:

"Do I contradict myself?

Very well, then, I contradict myself."

After the table of Contents comes a list of things not to be forgotten—things specially intended to be used:

### FOR THE OPENING

"And I shall not argue much; assertion is enough.

"There are two worlds, p. 806.

"That there *is* a moral government, 811.

"I cannot give people the resurrection, but I can show them that they never die, 812.

"The church and the Supernatural.

"Go and run up and down.<sup>1</sup>

"Life and Death like heat and cold, 814.

"If the Church were a body of men paid to represent the

<sup>1</sup> This was a gag used by Herbert Campbell in some pantomime, the idea being, "Don't bother me, go outside and run up and down; I'll attend to you presently." But I cannot remember how it was to be utilized in the book.

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current feeling of the time, etc. So it does in a way, but in such a cumbrous roundabout way.

“ Trying to make the best of both worlds, 824.

“ Set not your hearts upon the things of this life, etc.

“ We give up Christ for Christ's sake.”

Then follow the Notes themselves in which no alterations have been made here except that only a selection from them is given as samples, and the page references to the “ C.P. BK.” have been omitted. But the four Essays as given here do not include the indexes, and there are a few verbal alterations, made with the intention of clearing away those small obscurities and redundancies which seem always to occur in a first writing. No doubt he would have cleared them away himself if he had carried out the intention with which he began to write what turned into *Luck, or Cunning?* And beyond these few verbal alterations made in the text, I have taken the liberty of splitting the writing up into sections and of providing the sections with sub-titles, thus, as I hope, softening the too frequent repetitions, providing occasional breathing-places, and making it possible to add a table of Contents to facilitate reference. Any reader who objects to these divisions and sub-titles is at liberty to neglect them, and to read each essay through as a connected whole. Perhaps “ Essays ” is the wrong word, and they ought to be called “ Dissertations upon the Proposition that Everything is interpenetrated with its Opposite.” If the reader, whether he treats each dissertation as a separate piece or as a collection of smaller pieces, should be inclined to complain that the flow of the writing, either way, is formless, let him reflect that when he is offered the raw material he should not expect to find the finished product. And if he reflects still further he may come to the conclusion that, after all, the rambling discursiveness of the treatment at any rate illustrates one of the leading ideas of the subject by presenting an example of Unity in Variety and Variety in Unity.

H. F. JONES.

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## *Life and Habit, vol. 2*

### CONTRADICTION IN TERMS: PART I

#### *The Natural End of Propositions*

**I** PROCEED WITH PLEASURE TO ANOTHER VERY different opponent.

Professor Mivart's main objection<sup>1</sup> to the theory advanced in *Life and Habit* is the one so generally taken—that it is a contradiction in terms to speak of unconscious knowledge and unconscious memory. No doubt the contention that there is such a thing as unconscious knowledge comes to much the same as saying that we can have, and have under certain circumstances, “an unconscious consciousness,” and hence does involve contradiction in terms. But in the first place, contradiction or no contradiction not an hour passes in the life of any man without his being able to find many cases, if he will observe them, in which he has done things as he believes unconsciously, which nevertheless could not have been done without some taint of consciousness; and, in the second, even those writers who most insist that “unconscious memory” is an unsound expression do almost invariably slide into using the expression when they have once salved their consciences with a protest. Moreover, those who make this objection should give examples of something which will not resolve itself into contradiction in terms, if it is pursued far enough.

Contradiction in terms is the natural end of all propositions; it is to them what death is to the living organism; it is the dust from which they come and unto which they must return; and to suppose that we can get so much as a single sentence which cannot be wrangled into the deaths of absurdity or contradiction is to suppose that we can see God and live. Could we see one single little thing not as through a glass darkly, but face to face, could we get indefeasible possession of any foothold no matter how small, we should

<sup>1</sup> See Mivart's article, “Organic Nature's Riddle,” *Fortnightly Review*, March and April 1885.

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make it a *point d'appui* and, ere long, form a system of incontrovertible philosophy the like of which is certainly nowhere to be seen at present except in the wordless philosophies of living organisms; and even these prove controvertible with change of time and surroundings. So, again, if we could get behind the scenes and understand thoroughly what is involved in any change, no matter how trifling, the mysteries of life and death would be revealed.

### *Juggles*

Where is the philosophy which does not in the end fail and is not supplanted by another—that is to say, which is not found sooner or later to involve absurdity or contradiction in terms, or some other deadly logical sin? Those who content themselves with objecting to a system that it contains within itself the germs of contradiction in terms are like certain savage races who have not yet come to know that death is the necessary end of all men, and who believe concerning every man that here at last they have found some one who, if he only have fair play, will never die. Every proposition, nay every idea, carries within itself the seeds of its own undoing. All words and all combinations of words are juggles; of course there are degrees of juggles; but, strictly, if there is any little rift of juggle in the matter the whole thing is in honour bound to confess itself convicted of sin and to become mute accordingly. So that to brush a proposition off-handedly on one side on the score that it involves juggle in words is often a greater juggle than the juggle it is intended to expose. The question is not, Can any little rift of weakness or knavery be discovered by the curious within even the most respectable proposition? but, Is the rift greater than that within other propositions? Is the knavery greater than what is commonly held to be fair trading? Is it, again, the least knavery which the circumstances admit? Is it, moreover, convenient? Is it a mode of arranging the ideas which we have got, no matter how fraudulently our ancestors may have come by them, in a

## *Life and Habit, vol. 2*

more commodious way than they have been arranged hitherto, or the reverse? Can you play on the lute now, though very likely it will indeed have to go and be mended later on?

### *Spontaneous Generation*

The famous French aphorism, "La propriété c'est le vol," has never been upset; all property is doubtless tainted with far-away violence, and so all our ideas and mental acquisitions of any kind are based on violence or chicane, if we choose to pry into their origin. The case, however, is not so bad as it seems, for a great result is produced by the accumulation of very small violences or frauds, and these are like the poor, we have them always with us. We must for ever have minute spontaneous generations and creation of something out of nothing (meaning "spontaneous *quais*," and "nothing *quas*") though we rightly deny and in theory set our faces against what is commonly called spontaneous generation, or the possibility of any number of nothings making a something.

### *Distributing the Error*

As long as we use the same term for more than one thing or idea we shall have our ideas and terms from time to time coming into collision with, and contradicting, one another. The only way of escaping this is to coin so many new words for every shade of meaning that thought and language must be smothered to death by their own offspring terminology. We want to have everything both ways; we want perfect freedom from contradiction in terms, and at the same time to avoid overloading language with unnecessary words, and this cannot be done; common consent has long since settled that the lesser of two evils is the occasional error introduced through various shades of meaning being attached to the same word, as for instance that "consciousness" should cover a wide range of degrees of consciousness, in the extremes of which the consciousness should tend to vanish.

It is not a question of error or no error, but of the dis-



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tribution of the error. Has it been so distributed that the strings of our thoughts are in more equal temperament, and hence capable of a wider range of modulation, and of more varied harmonies? or has it been so distributed that while there may be less error in one key there is more in all its neighbours? I grant there is no perfectly satisfactory way out of the difficulty of terminology any more than there is out of the difficulties of temperament. If we go into temperament theoretically we become involved in hopeless inconsistencies. We can do nothing right. If we tune our organs just, we cannot modulate freely; if we tune them according to equal temperament, they do not sound well; if we do as Handel did with the Foundling organ and put in some enharmonic notes,<sup>1</sup> we complicate our mechanism, and besides this, the more we have of them the more we want; to be comfortable in theory we should have several dozen of them, and then we could not play the organ in comfort, even if we had money enough to have such a complicated piece of mechanism constructed. If we allow ourselves to be symmetry-ridden, there is peace neither in just intonation, nor in equal temperament, nor yet in any compromise between them, nor in anything either in this world or in the next, or in the one after that—and yet what beautiful music has been written by those who took the organ as they found it and made the best they could of it! Helmholtz would have been of no use to Handel.

### *The Convenience of Contradiction*

My contention is that it will in the long run cause least discord with our other ideas to suppose that we grow our limbs and contract our habits mainly as the result of an experience retained and made available through the fact of our being endowed with an intense but unconscious memory of all things that men and animals are generally able to remember; and that this, though it does indeed involve contradiction in terms to some extent—as when ancient

<sup>1</sup> [Cf. note on p. 172 *post.*]

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writers speak of a soundless sound or a sightless seeing, of strength being but labour and sorrow, or being perfected in weakness, or as when St. Paul bids us be instant in season "and out of season"—will yet involve less contradiction on the whole than any other hypothesis. So again St. Paul speaks of a spiritual body, and of "a body of death." So Mr. Herbert Spencer speaks of "a body of consciousness." So we say that history never repeats itself, and in the same breath that it is always repeating itself. Nay we are so many living contradictions in terms ourselves, for every part of us is both us and not us at one and the same time. It is us in so far as it is receptive and deliberative; it is not us in so far as it is being used as a mere tool, or organ, as when we take our fist and throw it up against someone as though it were a stone we have picked up out of the street. So again decent with modification involves contradiction in terms.

I grant that the proposition I am defending is not all that can be wished—propositions are like men, they have all sinned and come short of the glory of God—but it is the most convenient we can get, at any rate for the moment. I am aware also that it has been proposed to substitute "unconscious cerebration" for the unconscious memory which I uphold as the most convenient expression of the facts; but the only gain from this is that the contradiction in terms is more concealed, and as a *per contra* the invaluable word "memory" is sacrificed. I say the contradiction lurks in unconscious cerebration instead of appearing on the face of it; for "unconscious cerebration" really stands for "unconscious discharge of all those functions whereby we cognize thought and in which our minds are inseparable from thought"; so that it virtually amounts to "unconscious thought." And indeed I see Mr. Hyde Clark writing to *Nature* (4th June 1885) to uphold the expression unconscious "thought" as the apter of the two, which indeed, if the value of words consists in the ease with which they convey ideas, would seem to be correct. But thought involves deliberation, and this, in its turn, consciousness; so that the

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expression "unconscious cerebration" has within itself all the germs of "unconscious consciousness," and is only an attempt to shirk the difficulty by stating it so that it shall be less easily seen. The desire to do this proceeds from pride. So-called men of science will not allow that they are men of like intellectual infirmities with the common run of mankind; whereas in point of fact we must all eat our peck of intellectual dirt, men of science just as much as other people. The man of science and nature, like any other conjurers, must be watched away from their fuss.

### *No Certain Knowledge*

With every one but men of science the fact that we have no certain absolute knowledge *va sans dire*. We do not even know what a thing is, and until we do how can we pretend that we know this or that thing in any but its most obvious relations? Professor Mivart himself is among those who have been lately asking "what is a thing?" He asked, but he did not answer. So Professor Moseley was reported not long ago as having said that it was almost impossible to say what "an individual" is.<sup>1</sup> Surely if it is only "almost" impossible to do this Professor Moseley should at any rate have tried to do it; if on the other hand he did try and failed, he might have spared his "almost." "Almost" is a dangerous word. I once heard a man say that an escape he had had from drowning was "almost" providential.<sup>2</sup>

### *Classification*

The difficulty arises from the fact that we may look at "almost" everything from two different points of view. If we are in the humour for emphasizing resemblances rather than differences, we can find excellent reasons for ignoring recognized lines of demarcation, and unifying and unifying till we join the two most distant stars in heaven and call them

<sup>1</sup> *The Times*, 13th June 1885.

<sup>2</sup> He is thinking of Uncle James's escape from shipwreck, cf. *Memoir*, i, 7.—H.F.J.

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one thing, as being linked together and united in the eyes and souls of men, and individuality after individuality disappears till nothing is recognized but one universal whole. If on the other hand we are in a mood for emphasizing differences rather than resemblances we can subdivide and subdivide, and, unless we violate what we choose to call our consistency somewhere, we shall find ourselves with as many names as atoms. We can only escape the Scylla of having a different name for everything, by falling into the Charybdis of calling everything by the same name, or by some piece of sharp practice like that of the shrewd but unprincipled Ulysses. If we were consistent, honourable gentlemen, into Charybdis or on to Scylla we should go like lambs; every recalcitrant act in respect to them is but an act of arbitrary high-handed classification which ignores the weak and all that is not strong enough to give trouble to the classifier; being men of sense, however, we pocket our consistency at a pinch and will not let the native hue of resolution be sicklied o'er with the pale cast of thought, nor yet fobbed off by the rusty curb of logic; and we know very well that the poor abuses of the time want countenance as much now as ever they did in Shakespeare's day.

### *Integrating and Disintegrating*

Doubtful boundaries always involve contradiction in terms, for it is at these points that the same word is used in two or more senses. It was the desire to avoid these awkward places which made men turn a deaf ear to the cries of transitional cases, and draw their lines as hard and fast as they could. This, at the cost of sacrificing details and massing things in squarely, they did and continued to do till the error thus caused became intolerable, and a reaction ensued in favour of more detail with greater roundness and less severity of definition. On the one hand there is simplicity, with freedom from contradiction in terms, purchased at the cost of a sacrifice of facts which, by and by, refuse to be sacrificed and turn upon their persecutors and rend them;

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On the other hand there is greater range of facts with greater power of comparing them and of seeing their bearings upon one another, purchased at the cost of increased contradiction in terms. The world always has and always will oscillate between these two opinions and, according as either has been overdone, will incline towards the other. It will always, in fact, have alternate periods during one of which it will be inclined to emphasize points of agreement and run things into one another; and, during the other, points of difference so as to draw its lines as hard and fast as possible; and these moods overlap one another. For the harmonies of the universe are written in many parts, and one part is doing one thing while another is doing something different. But at all times a never-ending succession of call and answer between the moods of integration and disintegration is the normal state of mind, as it is of matter.

For the moment we are in an integrating humour. To let alone the way in which kingdom after kingdom has disappeared from the map of Europe, and the signs of an aggregating movement among nations which are as notorious as obvious—letting all material things alone and looking only to the world of thought—what a disappearance of old landmarks has there not been during the lifetime of this present generation! Everywhere the tendency has been to substitute very soft blurred divisions for hard and fast ones. This does not make that there shall be no difference between the two things that are thus united, any more than it makes red blue because the blue of the spectrum gradates insensibly into the red, but it does make a far larger borderland of doubtful cases in almost every domain of classification than was contemplated until recently; and this means that contradiction in terms (as that a hue, where blue and red join, shall simultaneously be both red and not red) has a far larger place in things, and is far more an indispensable condition of thought than we are accustomed to admit. Moreover, in the purest red there are, as it were, the upper partials of blue, and in the purest blue those of red.

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### *Boundaries Recently Destroyed*

At the risk of appearing to digress I will run briefly through a few cases in point which may bring this more directly before the mind.

(a) *Species*: The middle-aged reader will remember that when he was young varieties were indeed held to be somewhat loosely defined, but that species had hard and fast outlines; God made them such as we now see them, and unless sooner extinguished they would remain as now till the end of the world. How soft and blurred have not the outlines of species now become! Then the division between man and the lower animals, which had been as clean-cut as could be wished, was found to be so only by an illusion, and the difference was felt by those who, it may be safely predicted, will carry the day, to be one of degree and not of kind. True, the links are not to be found now living, but no one doubts that they have lived.

(b) *Reason and Instinct*: Who again now draws a sharp line between conscious reason and unconscious instinct, and what does this involve but that there is a point of contact between the two where the conscious and the unconscious both partake somewhat of the nature of the other—that is to say in which there is contradiction in terms?

(c) *Plants and Animals*: Then the division between plants and animals went the way of species. Thirty years ago plants had not even intelligence—much less instinct; as for reason, the word was never mentioned in connection with them. But where is the botanist now who doubts that the marvels of adaptation, which meet us at every turn throughout the vegetable kingdom, have been arrived at by processes of reasoning analogous in every particular to those through which we have ourselves invented the steam engine? Who doubts that plants can think, reflect, and take this or that course, whichever they shall think best on a balance of considerations, make mistakes, profit by flukes, be born some more intelligent than others, and all the rest of it? I am

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Sorry it is so, for I do not know what the vegetarians will come to; and ere long we may have antivivisectionists getting a law passed to forbid cutting roses even under chloroform, but this is no affair of mine; my present concern is with the fact that the vegetable kingdom has ceased to exist as a thing sharply divided off into a region of its own.

(d) *Organic and Inorganic*: As though this were not enough, those who had invaded and conquered the vegetable world could not rest here. There was still a great division left which was this time definite beyond all chance of obliteration; the organic and inorganic were two absolutely distinct things and no mode of classification conceivable by human ingenuity could bridge over the impassable gulf between them. A few short years, and organic and inorganic go in and out one with the other as members of a single household, and we shall have to give chloroform to the chloroform before we can give it to the roses.

That this last is no exaggeration may be seen from the following quotation from the first scientific paper that I can lay my hand on.

"Changes in the character of organisms are now admitted to be determined by two factors—the inherent properties of the organism and the influence of surrounding circumstances. A very little consideration will serve to show that the changes which occur during and subsequent to the development of minerals and rocks are determined by two allied factors.

"Take the case of crystallogenesis. It is not difficult to see in a general kind of way that the characters which a crystal possesses have been determined (1) by the inherent properties of the crystallizing substance, and (2) by the influence of the surrounding circumstances—of the environment.

\*

"It is impossible to determine absolutely the composition of these globulites, but there seems no reason to doubt the conclusion of Vogelsang that they are portions of the Canada

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balsam which are richer in sulphur than the surrounding mass, and that they arise in consequence of the attempt of sulphur to crystallize under unfavourable circumstances.

\*

“Between crystallites and perfect crystals, showing definite external faces, there are numerous intermediate forms such as microlites and skeleton crystals. As further illustrations of the influence of the environment we have only to consider the facts that no two crystals of the same substance are precisely alike in all their characters, and that some substances, like sulphur and carbonate of lime, may be made to crystallize in two different systems by varying the conditions under which the crystallization is effected.

“There can be no doubt, then, that two factors are employed in the determination of the properties which crystals present: the inherent forces of the crystallizing substance and the influence of the surrounding substances.

“So far we have referred only to the birth and growth of crystals. But the history of a crystal does not cease with its formation. With a change in the surrounding circumstances a crystal may be modified or destroyed. Thus we see that crystals have a kind of life-history; they are born, they grow in size by accretion, and finally they cease to exist as distinct individuals.

\*

“Consider, now, the rocks of which the earth’s crust is composed. They also have a life-history. They are formed and destroyed, and it is the business of the petrographer not only to describe and classify them but also to trace out the cycle of change.”<sup>1</sup>

And so, not long ago I saw an advertisement of machines to “fulfil all duties.” This implies that machines not only have moral obligations, but also consciousness of the same, for there can be no moral obligation without a moral sense

<sup>1</sup> From “The Scope and Method of Petrography,” by J. J. H. Teale, *Nature*, 12th March 1885.



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to be obliged. We say again of chemical substances that, whether they do "behave" in such and such a manner or no, at any rate "they ought" to do so; than which no ascription of moral sense can be more precise. It may be said that the words "duties" and "ought" are applied inconsiderately and inaccurately. I am informed, however, that they are in common use as the fittest and most compendious rendering of the facts; and this involves that the inorganic, and more particularly that branch of it which may be called the organic inorganic—I mean machines—whether it has a moral consciousness or no at any rate appears to have one; but this concedes the whole point at issue, for it is as much as can be said of any one—nay, even of those statesmen who are considered more particularly and *par excellence* conscientious. We should be sorry to say that these have in reality more principle than a good machine, or than a magpie for the matter of that; but they present so many of the phenomena of having a conscience that we, in our turn, are obliged to present the phenomena of believing that they have one. And this is exactly what has happened at last with the inorganic; it has begun to present so many of the phenomena of moral consciousness that common sense has taken to using the same words in respect of their conduct as in respect of beings whose moral consciousness is undisputed. Behind this we cannot go. We cannot say for certain that a machine will not try to borrow money off us any more than we can say for certain that Mr. Gladstone himself is a man of plain, direct, and straightforward character; all we can say for certain—and indeed we can say it much more certainly in respect of the machine than of the statesman—is that a well-bred machine does commonly behave as it is expected, and as it ought, to do; and this is held to justify our saying of it that it fulfils its duties in an efficient and satisfactory manner. It is doubtless our sense of the nascent moral consciousness among the higher machines which makes us christen ships by throwing champagne bottles at them.

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(e) *Mind and Matter*: And now the division even between mind and matter is tottering to its fall, and they are being seen no longer as two things, but as modes of a common substratum of which we know nothing, but which in one state appear to us as matter and in another as mind,<sup>1</sup> though retaining in either state some savour of its opposite. Not only are they one thing in essence, but, as might be expected if this is so, they each manifest the same obedience to far-reaching, all-controlling laws. Who, for example, doubts that the roundness of the dew drop is part of the same story as the globular form of the sun? But who again can doubt that the greater good a tired barrister gets out of a trip on the continent over that which he gets out of a trip in England is part of the same story as the good effected by judicious crossing in plants and animals; and that this in its turn is part of the same story as the preference exhibited in nature for sexual over asexual generation? So that alike in spiritual and material things we see the same largeness of law embracing the greatest and the least and bringing each alike within the sphere of its operation. As the atom of matter is but the star writ small, so the minutest atomic action is an epitome of the most momentous. The farthing and the million pounds are alike money and will each equally act according to its kind.

### *Atoms*

As for time and space such measurements prove, if we examine them closely, to be but as taking bits of ourselves and nailing them on to ourselves as battens so that we may climb up ourselves more easily. If we insist on taking out all the contradiction in terms, and in carrying unification to the bitter end we come to this—that there is one thing only, and one time and one place and one action; and on this the bubble bursts and the other extreme has come upon us and there is nothing. If, on the other hand, we have taken it into our heads to separate in virtue of supposed distinctions,

<sup>1</sup> See *Conscious Matter*, by W. Stewart Duncan. David Bogue, 1881.

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we can separate and separate till we find that even the most solid homogeneous things are not one but many, each one of which has an individuality of its own; and we shall have to invent an atom to keep ourselves quiet with, as though we had here touched bottom and found something big enough for us to think of, but not big enough for us to conceive of it as capable of being cut in half.

And then when we stand alone face to face with our atoms and have shorn them of every shred of alien substance, and got all unity of every kind out of them, making each one absolutely *totus teres atque rotundus* within itself, we shall have got something so inert, so unassailable, so void of parts or weaknesses of any kind, that no power, earthly or unearthly, will ever get any union back into it again. There is no *point d'appui*, nothing to begin to work upon towards union again. Once get your atom absolutely a thing *per se*, and a thing *per se* it must remain for ever and ever; and no number, however great, of such separate things will ever unite into a something again.

So if we have united things till we have got all separate-ness and individuality of subordinate parts out of them, we can never disjoin them again. And, if we want an atom, we must content ourselves with the universe, for we can have none smaller; and indeed we ought not to pretend that there can be anything, except the universe, from which we can cut nothing off. The universe is indeed a *bona fide* atom, for we cannot cut a fragment off it and throw it away on to something else—but there is no other atom than this. Whereon the discomfort becomes too great and we tumble over on to the other side.

### Contradiction Necessary

This is what comes of trying to do without contradiction in terms. People say that whatever happens there must be no contradiction in terms. If a thing is one, it cannot at one and the same time be more than one. If it be more than one it cannot at one and the same time be one only. Whereas

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in point of fact it is only in virtue of faith in incessant omnipresent contradictions in terms that we can speak, think, or act at all. It is not only the just that shall live by faith; there is no one who can get on without it, even for an hour. Granted that for easy living the contradictions should not be too glaring, but they should be always there. It is the fact of their being contradictions in terms which have to be smoothed away and fused into harmony with each other and with their surroundings which jars us into life and consciousness at all; if things not perfectly in harmony with existing ideas were not incessantly sprung upon us, like showers of meteors falling into the sun, we should pass our lives as it were in sleep. As usual, we want to have things both ways — we want the freedom from jar which perfect absence of contradiction gives, and yet we want the consciousness which can be got only by jarring. Trouble is our sense that this or that violates some canon which we have been accustomed to respect, but all life has in it something that partakes more or less clearly of the nature of trouble, for man is born unto trouble as the sparks fly upward. And if even a little leaven of perfect freedom from the grit of contradiction in terms, and even ever such a little perfect going on all fours with itself were introduced into the world, it would be found ere long to work up to the destruction of all life and consciousness whatever.

### *Absolute Truth*

To a living being then there can be no absolute "It is" without the skeleton of an "It is not" in some one or other of its cupboards. When all the "Is not" has been got rid of, the "Is" will have been got rid of too. There is no proposition which stands so high above the chances of fate, but it must give its sop to Nemesis. The remarkable thing, however, is that, though we very well know absolute truth to be unattainable, we are inevitably constrained to act as if it were attainable. Effort after the elimination of all error is like the knowledge of the future, which if we strive

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not after we are lower than the brutes, but which if we get we are more miserable than the devil. We have only come to be able to do what we can through incessant strivings after an ideal absolute standard; yet, as has been said already, if we could get absolute knowledge upon any, even a single, subject we should ere long cease to exist, or at any rate cease to be conscious of existence. Happily there is no fear that people will leave off aiming at this, for we all of us in practice qualify reason with faith, and, happily also, there is not the remotest chance that we shall get what we are striving after.

Contradiction in terms should be felt as the harmonics which arise when any single note is struck, and which have an all-powerful influence, though their presence can only be detected as *timbre*, or by artificial appliances. Here again we have contradiction in terms, for how can the presence of these harmonics be important—which means that they are perceived as affecting our naked ears in some important way—when at the same time they are so unimportant that they can often only be brought home to consciousness at all by the use of elaborate artificial aids? Our only chance is to plead guilty at once—to admit that we do believe in a multitude in unity and a unity in multitude, in a consciousness in unconsciousness and an unconsciousness in consciousness; and that this same irony pervades all things to the sixth and seventh reactions as the reflections of one looking-glass in another are bandied backwards and forwards till they become too small for us, and even then we know that they are still there, only that we cannot see them. So, for example, when we say that there is nothing certain, the harmonics of certainty arise forthwith, in that if there is nothing certain it cannot be certain that there is nothing certain, and there may be something certain after all; on this there is reaction, and counter-reaction, battledore-and-shuttlecocking for ever—so that the proposition that there is nothing certain is perfectly true and perfectly untrue simultaneously; as is also the proposition that there is something

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certain; each of these propositions is as true and as false as the other, and each is as true and as false as anything can be. This is a little puzzling at first, but we soon become used to it, and it is acquiesced in by all amiable people frankly, and without compunction, as by those who have tried principle and consistency, know all about them, pay them all respectful homage, but will take whatever ill may come rather than be their slaves any longer. As usual, we must choose between absurdity at the two logical extremes, and want of logic in the mean wherein we can alone rest.

### *Words*

And even if we could know anything once and for ever unassailable we could not express it—not, at least, in words. Words are, as I have elsewhere said, at their best, only a succession of more or less compendious false analogies, and giving parts for wholes; and the wrong part is given, or we take the wrong though the right is given, and on this there is intellectual bloodshed. Words do well enough to ask for meat and drink withal at an inn, but to use them beyond a very early stage of philosophical enquiry is like trying to cut up an iron bedstead with a wooden spoon, to mend a watch with a pickaxe, or to paint a miniature with a mop; people do these things, and sometimes do them extremely well, but they have no business to be able to do them at all. Nevertheless words are like our neighbours, we have got to live with them and should make the best, not the worst of them. The very worst use to which they can be put is to try and go too far below the surface of things with them, or to insist upon their being invariably used according to the rules of logic. Indeed, whenever we see a man reverting to logic at all we know him for one whose words we need read no further.

### *Temper*

The only true logic is in temper—in the power of understanding all things, believing all things, hoping all things;

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and, at the same time, understanding perfectly well that our fullest understanding goes but a little way beneath the surface, that we should be very cautious in our beliefs, and that the less we hope the less likely we are to be disappointed; in the power of putting up with the small crosses and ills of intellectual life, and of fusing them without fuss into a harmonious ensemble. St. Paul calls this charity; I prefer to call it temper, for this word explains itself better than charity does, and shows better what it is that underlies alike moral and intellectual excellence—I mean it shows better that the secret of knowing, like the secret of loving and of being loved, lies in the stopping short of logical consistency, of shutting our eyes to much, of seeing much which we know is not there, and in ready, graceful compromise between the moods of yieldingness and of unyieldingness. But whether we give to this subtle indefinable power the name of charity or temper, its nature is the same, and a little reflection will show that the strength of a philosopher, like that of a saint, consists in the power through which an embryo fuses the inconsistent stories it has received from its two different parents into a new tale which is neither quite consistent nor quite inconsistent. It consists in the power of “tempering” theory with practice, and practice with theory without letting either predominate unduly; of dealing reasonably with the unreasonable; of working small impossibilities; of creating small somethings out of nothings, and turning them back into nothings should this suggest itself as the kindest, most reasonable unreason available at the moment. It consists in fact of the due use of contradiction in terms, than which, as I have said in *Life and Habit*, there is nothing, under certain circumstances, in such complete harmony with itself. The highest intellectual excellences resolve themselves eventually into the simple ones of good temper and sympathy or common sense.

What is due and what is not due, this is the main point; and it is one which none can settle rightly save under the guidance of that Spirit which is as the voice of the Lord that

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maketh men to be of one mind in an house; of that Spirit which is with the one true Catholic Church of all amiable people always, yea even unto the end of the world; of that Spirit blasphemy against which is more unforgivable than any blasphemy against either the Father or the Son; of that Spirit which cannot be gotten for gold, neither shall silver be weighed for the price thereof, but in respect of which the Lord hath mercy on whom he will have mercy and whom he willeth he hardeneth; of that Spirit which makes it that to those who have loved much much shall be forgiven. I mean of that Spirit or Sense which is common to all mankind; or, more briefly, of Common Sense.



*Ultimate Atoms*

THE INEVITABLENESS OF CONTRADICTIONS in terms is so much lost sight of, and at the same time involves such pregnant consequences that I will pursue the subject in this present chapter.

Those who will have no contradiction in terms say that the universe must be either finite or infinite and that here there can be no contradiction in terms. This sounds plausible, but if we try to conceive of the universe as finite in the direction of the little, making our atoms divisible only up to a certain point beyond which we affirm there can be nothing smaller—denying, in fact, an infinitely little and making the little finite, whatever we may do with the great—if we try to do this we come upon contradiction in terms at once, for we cannot conceive of anything large enough to exist which is not also large enough to be cut in half, if we had a knife sharp enough and delicate enough to cut it with. That is to say we require our ultimate atom to have two attributes which are inconsistent and mutually destructive, namely, divisibleness, without which we cannot think of it as possessing extension at all, and indivisibleness without which it is not ultimate. I do not say that this militates against the theory of ultimate atoms. Their being founded on a contradiction in terms is not, according to this present argument, any fatal blow to their being the most convenient settlement we can arrive at. They may be or may not be, I cannot pretend to be able to form an opinion; all I can say with confidence is that whether atoms are reducible in respect of material substance or not, they cannot escape the universal law of being speedily reducible to contradiction in terms, if any one has a mind to reduce them to it.

The case would be different if those who contend about atoms only meant that the smallest unit actually in common use is so and so, whatever it may happen to be, that they are not made any smaller than this, which is the least thing in matter; just as farthings are our least thing in English money, not because we could not have a smaller coin if we

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wanted it, but because we do not find we want one. And so at the other extreme with Sirius, and sovereigns. But they do not intend this, they want a finality and primariness, whether of motion or substance or thought, which their lot as human beings will not allow them. They talk of "ultimate" atoms, and by this they mean not only the smallest that are, but the smallest that can by any possibility exist. It may indeed be that there are atoms each one of which is some millionths of an inch in diameter, and than which nothing can be cognized smaller. It may be that as soon as matter reaches this degree of tenuity it passes into some other mode of existence where we can no longer apprehend it, as water on getting below thirty-two degrees becomes ice; but this is a very infinite kind of finity, and we cannot believe that matter would always pass in and out of the material state exactly at this point any more than water freezes or boils exactly at the point set down for it, or than anything ever does anything in all respects exactly as it ought. We may be sure the atoms stand just as much in need of a general confession as we do. I am not, however, denying that matter may be finite as regards its subdivisibility; all I maintain is that its being so is unthinkable by us except as a contradiction in terms, and that therefore unless we admit contradiction in terms, we cannot consider the universe as finite in the direction of the little.

If, again, we try to make our universe finite in the direction of the great, and think of it as coming to a dead stop at some very remote distance, beyond which there shall be no more universe, but simply nothing, we find ourselves involved in contradiction in terms just as quickly and just as inexorably as before. I have had it said to me that we know the world to be finite and should therefore have no difficulty in supposing the universe to be only very big and not infinite. The answer is that we cannot call the world finite merely because some one a little way off would see it like a round ball. The earth and stones of it are not finite, they pass into the sea salt on the one hand, and into fiery gases for aught

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we know upon the other; and the sea passes into the air by evaporation, and it is only through the mercy of our not having very good eyes that we do not see the heavenward waterfall which is being poured incessantly into the sky (indeed, we may thank the roughness and rudeness of our bodily organs for our inability to see anything as itself pure and simple—we see and hear quite as much as we can stand) and the atmosphere melts away into the ether, and the world's finity melts along with it. The earth is as a rather solid nucleus in a mass of undifferentiated ether, but so long as a ray from it can impinge upon the substance of some other planet it is not finite except by courtesy. It is meddling and mixing itself up with other things, and it has no end.

But even if we waive this, and admit the universe to be finite; then we come upon nothing as soon as we are at the universe's end, and we cannot conceive of nothing without making it a something; so that we may think of it at all. There can be no such thing as nothing. To posit nothing is to posit something of which we have had no experience and which therefore cannot be posited intelligently—that is to say, which cannot be posited without an alloy of either absurdity or contradiction in terms—not at least in words.

Again, I do not say that this fact by itself militates against the finity of the universe; it may or may not be finite, all I contend is that, if finite, it only is so in virtue of our thinking an impossibility—a contradiction in terms—and that think as we will, we can be soon driven into contradiction in terms if anyone has a mind to drive us.

### *The Unseen World*

If, again, those who hold the universe finite and say it ends somewhere, beyond which there is nothing, allowed "nothing" to give its sop to Nemesis so far as that there shall be two nothings, the one a philosophical theoretical nothing which must remain an empty figure of speech, and the other a "practical" nothing, which is perfectly well understood to be only a nothing *qua* us—a something beyond

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the ill defined border within which the writs of human thought will run, and over [which] the courts of our senses have no jurisdiction, so that here there may be any number of dimensions, and a nothing may be a very little something so that two of them may make a something really almost quite thinkable, and like causes do not produce absolutely like effects, but there is a little *bona fide* spontaneous action somewhere, wholly unconnected with antecedent of any kind and thus absolutely causeless, which can originate minute variations—which when we have once got we can do the rest ourselves; a region where that which was absolutely immaterial may become material, and there may be motion though there is nothing moving, and change, though there is nothing changing, and a something which is neither mind nor matter, but a little of both and neither—a region in fact where contradiction in terms without attempt at disguise is the normal, and apparent consistency of ideas the abnormal way of conveying ideas about facts.<sup>1</sup> •

We believe that there is a kingdom where these things are though we have never set foot within it. To borrow an illustration of my friend Jones: The bishop that moves on the black squares of the chess-board knows nothing of the white squares nor of their bishops. He seems to himself to move so freely everywhere and is so inexorably excluded from the white squares that to him they are not. He can

<sup>1</sup> This bewildering sentence—if it can be called a sentence—appears in the ms. as it is given here, except that I have supplied one word and have written the abbreviations at length—245 words with commas, semicolons, dashes, and one full stop at the end. The sense is clear enough and, as I think, was originally carried on by the sentence which now begins the next paragraph but one: “To a nothing, then.” In the ms. the writing is the same in both; but that of the intervening illustration of the chess-bishops is in a different manner, and occupies an interpolated page numbered 61<sup>bis</sup>. No doubt he intended to tinker and remodel the whole passage. When I was writing in the *Memoir* (i, 176) about the domain of Faith and the domain of Reason I used the illustration, having forgotten at the moment, or perhaps not having known, that Butler had appropriated it for this essay. — H.F.J.

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take and be taken by all his other enemies, all but one, of whose existence he is ignorant; and the men of his own side can get in his way and hinder him, all but one, of whose existence he is in all respects without knowledge. What dreams or fancies may cross him as of a time when he was in a box and there were two enemy bishops buried with him, not one, and there was another bishop like himself. If any such idle notions flit across him when he is awake and on the board we may be sure he dismisses them as pawns' tales resting on nothing that deserves the name of evidence; and yet all the time there are other bishops just as important as himself who in their turn know no more of him than he of them. Nay, we know more of our unseen kingdom than our black square bishop does of the white square bishop; for we see our matter going right down into it—or else becoming nothing—which last is the harder thing of the two to believe in, and we see our ideas ceasing to have life and power when they have gone beyond a certain point, as having then reached a boundary beyond which they have no authority.

To a nothing, then, which is only the something of an unseen and unknowable kingdom, we make no objection, beyond pointing out that it involves the same old contradiction in terms all through it; and we do not mind that, but when men of science speak of nothing they mean no such nothing as this, they mean turning the screw upon us till we say that we can conceive of an absolute nothing—as though there is not just as much contradiction in terms here as everywhere else. The universe, therefore, is not finite either as regards the great or the little.

### *Infinity*

There remains only the hypothesis that it is infinite as regards both great and small, which means that having gone as far as we like in either direction we are no nearer an end than when we started, and this is absolutely inconceivable by us. Our minds cannot embrace the idea of infinity at all until we introduce the contradiction in terms of supposing

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a kind of pseudo-finity somewhere, a very long way off, by the help of which we can fancy that we have embraced the idea of a true infinity. This in reality is all that any one means when he speaks or thinks of infinity—something whose end he does not see, and he does not know where it is, nor what it is, nor how, nor what next, and it is too much trouble to think the matter out further. And as people cannot realize the idea of infinity at all without the help of contradiction in terms so still less can they realize the idea of this particular universe as infinite; all they realize is certain parts more immediately attuning on to themselves, which become more and more indistinct as they get further off—but this is a very finite kind of infinity.

Therefore as in the case of each of the subordinate hypotheses we run directly into contradiction in terms, so do we also as regards the main assertion that the universe must be either finite or infinite. For if there is contradiction in terms in supposing it finite and also in supposing it infinite there must be contradiction in terms in supposing it either one or the other—and it is only through the alloy, as I said above, of contradiction in terms that we can get any universe at all.

### *Space*

To such a contradiction indeed our best authorities are driven, though as a general rule they try to conceal it. Thus I saw Mr. R. A. Proctor not very long ago reported as saying that space was “practically” infinite<sup>1</sup>—which I suppose means that though not quite infinite it very nearly is so—that in fact it is “not too much” infinite, “but just infinite enough,”<sup>2</sup> as being a little infinite and a little finite at one and the same time. A month or two later Mr. Proctor ascribed the expression “practically infinite” to Professor Huxley,<sup>3</sup> who, I can well believe, may have originated it;

<sup>1</sup> *Times*, 24th March 1882.

<sup>2</sup> This is an allusion to a popular song of the period. — H.F.J.

<sup>3</sup> *Contemporary Review*, June 1882.

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and a few lines lower down he declares "the real universe" to be, "to all intents and purposes, infinite." This is much the most "practical" way out of the difficulty, but logical it is not. Here, as in all things, if we go prying about foundations we come upon a choice between two unthinkables arrived at in most orthodox accordance with all the rules of thought, and a thinkable which violates every canon on which thought and reason are founded.

In the same article to which I have just referred Mr. Proctor quotes a fine passage from M. Pasteur concerning the infinite which I need not apologize for repeating here:

"When the question is asked," says M. Pasteur, "what is there beyond the starry vault? it is useless to answer, 'beyond lies unlimited space.' When we ask what lies beyond the far-off time when what we see around us began to be, and what lies beyond the remote future when it will cease to exist, of what use is the answer 'beyond lie eternities of past and coming time?' Nobody understands these words. He who proclaims the existence of an infinite—and nobody can evade it—asserts more of the supernatural in that affirmation than exists in all the miracles of all the religions; for the notion of the Infinite has the twofold character of being irresistible and incomprehensible. When the notion seizes on the mind there is nothing left but to bend the knee . . . the springs of the intellectual life threaten to snap, and one feels near being seized with the divine madness of Pascal. Everywhere I see the inevitable expression of the infinite in the world."<sup>1</sup>

I deny that Pascal's madness was more divine than that of any other ill-regulated mind, but as regards the main idea, namely that the idea of the infinite is equally both necessary and inconceivable it is one which no one will dispute; and it might have been added that the idea of the finite is just both as necessary and as inconceivable as that of the infinite. Both finite and infinite are equally necessary and equally inconceivable.

<sup>1</sup> *Contemporary Review*, June 1882.

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### *Time*

What applies to space applies equally to time and to antecedents of any kind: if we say the universe had a beginning before which it was not, we think of something foreign to our experience, and this means that we cannot think of it at all. We know of nothing which has had any *bona fide* beginning. True, we say that everything must have had a beginning, but by beginning; we do not mean an ultimate and chimerical beginning, we intend only a convenient halting place at which to break off its name, and call it something else. We are obliged to mark things off in this way, for the convenience of thinking of them, speaking of them, and dealing with them at all if we did not put them up into lots, label them, and make believe for the moment that while we are dealing with any particular thing there is nothing in the universe except that thing and its immediate surroundings, we should have to ask for the universe every time we wanted a Bath bun, and starve before we could pick the bun out when the universe had been brought to us.

When, therefore, we say everything must have had a beginning we mean a beginning by courtesy only, and do not intend a true beginning as though the thing in question, whatever it may be, came up then and there at that particular point out of nothing. We know very well that it came up out of something else which something else has now vanished, or become only in part recognizable. This, however, is not what is intended by those who say that the universe had a beginning; they mean, or think they mean, that the universe came up out of absolutely nothing whatever at all a certain number of years ago. This at least is what one of their ablest exponents, Bishop Pearson, meant when he wrote the well-known passage beginning, "We find by experience of ourselves that some things have a beginning before which they were not,"<sup>1</sup> and this has no sooner to be considered by men who have no material stake at issue than it is rejected as

<sup>1</sup> *Exposition of the Creed*, Art. 1.



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unthinkable. It is the very thing of all others which our experience more particularly denies. On this we generally fly off to the other extreme and maintain the eternity of matter both as regards past and future to be more in harmony with our experience, and therefore more proper to be believed.

So at least we think at first. But on reflection we see that we can no more understand eternity with entire absence of beginning, than we could understand beginning with entire absence of eternal antecedent. We must have both beginning, which, if *bona fide*, implies absence of antecedents, and antecedents, which, if *bona fide*, implies absence of beginning. That is to say we want a contradiction in terms, and this, logic or no logic, is what we take and thrive upon, for all our action is based on the assumption both that everything has a beginning, and also at the same time that it never had any beginning at all. It is in this faith that we live and move, any other being instantly rejected as soon as we perceive its nature. The extremes as before are logical and absurd, the mean is practicable but illogical.

### *Tortoises and Slugs*

It is the old story. Some animals have tried to make themselves impregnable and so we have the huge mail-clad tortoises, living and extinct, whose ideal was to have no weak place, but to be defended absolutely at all points so that nothing could ever get at them to do them any harm. They took a great deal of trouble, and made themselves defences as huge as mediaeval hagiologies; but it did not come to much: there must be a place for the head and feet to come out at and these must actually come out sometimes, so that there shall be nakedness, or approximate nakedness, of contact between the tortoise and exterior objects, that is to say the tortoise must keep up its communications with its base or it will get starved out, and will no longer be in the world at all. Woe to those who would be in this world and not of it, and so the tortoises find out in due time

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just as other people do. They do not get on better than the slugs who have no armour at all; there are as many slugs as tortoises, if not more, and they are just as happy. How they must both despise the snails who do neither one thing nor the other, and how the snails must despise them as people who never know where to stop, and how perfectly right they all three would be if they would each only allow the other two to be so.

### *Speculating*

We have imitated the tortoises in trying to clothe truth in a suit of mail of reason, with the only result that she becomes unwieldy and that those who would attack her find more and more efficient means of penetrating her armour. Is it not time to admit that reason is all very well in its proper place as a good purveyor of raw material for truth to be worked up from, but is out of place and worse than useless to defend what has once been fully and finally declared truth, as an article of our faith; and that truth must submit to the common doom and undergo change just as much as everything else must? Perfect invulnerable truth is beyond our reach just as perfect security of any kind is and must always remain. There is no act so free from risk but the harmonics of gambling attend it. A millionaire who invests surplus income in consols is still speculating. He does not buy without considering consols to offer more advantages than any other investment; and on this the door is opened through which error and miscalculation to an untold extent may easily enter. His action has its weak place as even the soundest argument must have. This being so and since every mental and bodily action has in it something of the nature of venture and speculation, we can only be free of risk at the cost of taking no action at all. And if we do this we die at once.

Surely, then, it is better that we should speculate and sometimes burn our fingers, than never speculate, and see them wither from disease. Nothing venture nothing have applies

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to the world of thought as much as to that of matter. To give rules to tell people where to stop in speculation, how far they may go with tolerable safety, and when they will become mere gamblers is about as sensible as giving rules for behaviour in polite society; nothing but good sense and experience can avail here. But whatever we do we should not complain of them on the ground that they are speculating, or try to remove our actions from the category of the speculative when in reality we speculate with every step we take without reasoning it out in all fullness. We should only complain of them for not speculating successfully.

*Faith or Reason the Basis?*

PROFESSOR MIVART'S MAIN CONCLUSION IS the existence of "a constant, pervading, sustaining, directing, and all-controlling but unfathomable intelligence which is not the intelligence of irrational creatures themselves." I should myself prefer to say, "the existence of a constant, pervading, sustaining, directing, and all-controlling but unfathomable intelligence, which *both is and is not* the intelligence of the creatures themselves," leaving out the word "irrational" (for I cannot think Professor Mivart would insist on calling, we will say, a dog or an elephant irrational) and, with St. Paul, placing the omnipresent intelligence within as well as without. But most men will cordially admit that the universe is pervaded by an eternal, sustaining, directing, and all-controlling but unfathomable intelligence. I doubt, however, whether Professor Mivart does well to base his belief on reason. He says "to reason and to reason only I appeal when I affirm the existence of a constant, pervading, etc."—and this is one of those beliefs which should rest undisturbed on faith. I know, at least, that as long as I tried to make it rest on reason I got more and more out of my depth.

No one need be ashamed of basing any argument on faith, merely on the ground that he is not basing it on reason, nor consider a basis in reason *de rigueur* or, indeed, as a general rule, desirable. The greater part of all, even our conscious action, and "practically" all the action involved in the growth of our bodies is taken upon faith, and cannot be again reduced to reason except by processes of spiritual and intellectual self-vivisection which are in every sense the undoing of us. We take our souls to pieces as children playing with a watch, till we have no souls left to see what we have taken to pieces—and then we cannot put ourselves together again. This kind of self-vivisection in respect of any of the more important mental functions mars us *qua* vivisected more than it makes us *qua* vivisectors; we need not, therefore, apologize for making faith our basis wherever we find

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it go against our grain (as involving a reversal of the past) to reason consciously.

### *Faith the Dominant Pedal*

A reaction is wanted against the pretensions of reason now, as much as against those of faith in the Middle Ages. Reason has been made too much of. She can no more stand alone than faith can. I have seen it lately said of metaphysics that we begin with them as a broad well-beaten road, which gradually becomes a lane, then a sheep track, and ends by running us butt up against a tree. But reason will as readily run into metaphysics if faith does not hold it well in hand, as faith runs into superstition unless held in hand by reason. Between metaphysics and superstition there is surely not much to choose—indeed there is no such superstition as metaphysics, and no such metaphysics as physics in the hands of ill-tempered people. Faith and reason form, as it were, the government and the opposition of our minds; each is wanted as a check upon the other, and neither can long safely hold a monopoly of power.

At one time our instinct towards being logical and consistent—that is to say our faith in reason—is so strong that we indulge it and are blind to all else—we are always blind for the moment to all that we are not looking at; then, again, the instinct to brush logic and consistency on one side—that is to say, our faith in faith as higher than reason—asserts itself no less strongly than our faith in reason did. Both instincts are equally deeply implanted in us, and both are far too powerful to be either gainsaid or argued against. It is our business to hold the balance duly between the two, but in either case faith is as a dominant pedal, underlying and sustaining the tones that sound more plainly.

### *The Old and the New*

The boundaries of faith and reason are as unscientific as boundaries generally are. Roughly, new things are matters of reason and old of faith. But what is old? and what is

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new? These run into one another as unscientifically as faith and reason themselves, and faith (or common sense, which is a mode of faith) is often needed to say whether a matter falls more properly within the scope of faith or of reason; issue, again, may be joined as to whether it is not reason rather than faith which should decide this; and so on, till the point is lost amid discussion about method of procedure. Moreover, as in the purest speculation there is still some alloy of observation, and as again in the purest observation there is still an alloy of theory and speculation, provisional or otherwise, round which to group what is observed, so there are always harmonics of faith in reason, and of reason in faith; and there are degrees both of faith and reason, each of which gives different harmonics; so that we must stop somewhere or go mad. The rough and ready rule, however, is that reason is for the new and faith for the old.

### *The Very New*

There is this additional complication also, that for the very new there is neither faith nor reason but happy-go-lucky.

Then comes, what is very new? An old thing may have a single very new detail and, after having gone scatheless in respect of this ninety-nine times running, be struck down from its established position through being hit here on the hundredth. And what we call happy-go-lucky is not happy-go-lucky in reality; it does not mean that a thing cannot be linked on to design and reason, if we had power and patience to follow the connection in its speed and intricacy; it only means that its speed and intricacy baffle us, and make us prefer the unknown ill, that may come through denying the connection, to the known evil of trying to follow it. This, if we would confine ourselves to the nearest and most obvious harmonics; there are many others which can be heard distinctly if listened for, but which, to avoid complication need not be indicated beyond saying that as in the most absolute chance attainable there are harmonics of design and reason, so in the most absolute design there are harmonics of

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chance and blindness. It always is so in everything; as, for example, with heat and cold, mind and matter, specialism and generalization, desire and power, consciousness and unconsciousness, pain and pleasure, union and disunion, bodily pain and mental pain, important and unimportant, and indeed more or less with every word in the dictionary. For practical purposes, however, these harmonics are commonly useless except as affecting unconsciously to ourselves the *timbre* so to speak of our minds, or in so far that we should just keep one eye upon them from time to time. We should therefore (as indeed we commonly do) admit an absolute new and an absolute old, as though there were no harmonics; and should appeal to reason in respect of the new and to faith in respect of the old. So when Christianity was young, St. Peter told his converts to be able to give an answer to every man who asked them a reason of the hope that was in them with meekness and fear;<sup>1</sup> but in matters of conduct, which the world had long settled, St. Paul rests his commands on faith; he sums up the true, the honest, the just, the pure, and the lovely in "whatsoever things are of good report"<sup>2</sup> as having passed beyond the stage of being reasoned about and become matters of dogma, to be received on faith. Reason, in fact, is unable to deal with questions such as that of our own existence, or that there is a country, England, of which the capital is London—much more is it unable to deal with the intelligence which pervades the universe—we are involved in metaphysics and are brought up by our tree in a moment if we begin applying it to such cases as this. The world has been carried on so long upon the credit system that if required to cash up in full she must go bankrupt, as even the Bank of England must go bankrupt if all her notes were presented for payment at once; true, both gold and reason should be obtainable if required, but practically they are obtainable, and it is only because they are so very obtainable that they are sometimes not obtainable at all.

<sup>1</sup> 1 Peter, iii, 15.

<sup>2</sup> Philippians, iv, 8.

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### *The Two Kingdoms*

Neither can reason deal with such questions as that honesty is the best policy. Sometimes this can be shown to be true in a few plain words, but more often it cannot, and is taken as a matter of faith. How, again, will reason show that there is a kingdom which is not of this world? What effect can digging about the foundations of this faith, to see what it does or does not stand on, have but to endanger faith and reason alike, and to make the superstructure of our moral and intellectual well-being more likely to fall about our ears?

Not that the kingdom which is not of this world is certainly higher or better than that of this. It may or may not be. We cannot say till we know more about it. But the general practice reflects the current opinion of mankind upon the matter, namely, that the seen kingdom should stand to the unseen much in the same relation as man to woman, cherishing it and giving precedence to it, as to the weaker vessel so long as it does not assert itself unduly. The kingdom which is not of this world is held in common sense to be a good servant but a bad master; we could, however, no more get on without a lively faith in such a kingdom than we could if, like St. Paul, we thought of it, or thought we thought of it, exclusively. To say that we cannot serve God and Mammon is a mere orientalism meaning that we must make up our minds which of the two we will mainly follow, it was never intended to exclude harmonics, or to deny that each service was to be tempered with the other. Indeed it is the whole duty of man to temper the services of God and Mammon with one another charitably and according to the rules of common sense. To be in the world, and of it and not of it, at the same time—this is our *crux*; and to put it impatiently aside is to rebel against one of the plainest, though at the same time most difficult, of our duties.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> On the verso of the preceding page in the ms. Butler has these two notes, evidently intended to come in somewhere here on a second writing, but exactly where is not indicated:

[A man] "must not sulk churlishly like a spiritual clod exclusively in



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But whatever may be the relations between the two kingdoms, who doubts that the one not of this world has rewards and punishments often more considerable than any this world can offer? Nay, more, who can doubt that it is often well for a man to set every consideration of reason and of this world on one side rather than fail in temper and good faith? But what should we think of one who would try to build up this faith introspectively as matter of calculation out of the weak and beggarly elements of his reason? We know very well that if he has the conviction he will be as impatient of attempt to reason about it as he would be of argument to prove that he must pay his bill before leaving his hotel; and we also know very well that those who begin to reason much about right and wrong generally choose the wrong. A conscientious person invariably means one whose conscience is likely sooner or later to get him into a scrape.

### *Defying Right and Duty*

Again, who doubts that it is sometimes well to defy what we call right and duty, and sell our souls to the devil like men? Such cases are rare, but they can be found, and when found can no more be argued about than those in which we are irresistibly impelled to set aside all but the loftiest, most unselfish considerations. The kingdoms of God and Mammon run into one another as night into day, and cannot be cut sharply into a heaven and hell, any more than the animal and vegetable kingdoms can be divided sharply. In the lowest Mammon there is still some God: in the highest God there is still some little Mammon.

### *Holes in the Ice*

Of course the assertion that faith is in respect of the old and reason of the new involves that the foundations of all either kingdom; he must choose his country, but he must travel even to the being frequent with unknown minds and making new affections the catchword for an old offence."

"Spiritual cosmopolitanism."—H.F.J.

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our beliefs rest now in faith and not in reason,<sup>1</sup>—and that we can therefore no longer give a reasonable account concerning them. Not many will either deny this or so far fight against the inevitable as to let it seriously trouble them. We are like people skating upon ice which is thick enough to bear us so long as we do not knock holes in it to see how thick it is. Sometimes no doubt we do fall through holes which others, not we, have made, but as a general rule if we skate with ordinary prudence we come by little harm. The world will stand a good deal of knocking holes in it.

### *The Unknown Foundations*

There is indeed no system which pretends to get to the very bottom of things. There is none which when its pretences are examined does not found the known upon the unknown. All things, says Professor Mivart in effect, are of God; but he would be the last to pretend that he knows what God is; and unless he knows this, how does he found his system upon reason? With him, as with everyone else, it rests on a foundation of which we know nothing; nevertheless we act with confidence; and what is this but making faith not reason our foundation? We say, just as genuinely as Professor Mivart does, that all things come from others which in the end elude not only our senses but our powers of even conceiving; the known melts away into the unknown, and not only into the unknown, but into the eternal inconceivable. If anyone chooses to give the name of God to the unknown and inconceivable into which our known vanishes, we would as soon call it by this name as by any other and perhaps sooner, inasmuch as we feel, though we can hardly prove it, that it is pervaded by an intelligence to which our own does afford some kind of faint, far-away resemblance. This is all that Professor Mivart himself would maintain; and few would have been tempted to deny it, if the analogy which most men recognize had not been ridden to death by the Hebrew writers and the mediaeval

<sup>1</sup> [Cf. p. 142.]

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church and her painters. When we have been coaxed into admitting a constant, pervading, sustaining, directing, all-controlling but unfathomable Intelligence—which, if it stopped there, we should be very ready to admit—we suspect that those who have coaxed us will at once proceed so far to fathom the unfathomable as to dress it in flowing robes, give it a beard with as venerable an aspect as an often by no means venerable painter can impart to it, and then tell us that we must in all things follow their guidance inasmuch as they are in closer communion with the unfathomable Intelligence than we are. If they would be content to leave their God as undefined in practice as they do in theory, as something to be believed in but never reasoned about or even approximately defined, it is hard to see wherein the great difference of opinion between us would lie. And surely, even as matters stand, the difference is reduced to one of degree rather than of kind. Or rather, the difference need not seriously incommode us, for a difference of degree is a difference of kind, and a difference of kind is only a difference of a good many degrees. And it is “almost impossible” to say what a degree is. Let it be remembered, again, that in denying as we do that there is any knowledge which is known to more, as it were, than ten or a dozen places of decimals, we reopen the door for certainty; for if a man says he knows nothing he cannot know that he knows nothing and may be knowing something all the time. The louder the note uncertainty is struck the more clearly do the harmonics of certainty arise from it.

Incomparably the greater number of those whom we shall most wisely imitate have settled the matter that there is less risk in taking faith—that is to say the sense common to our species—as the basis of our action on all essential matters and abiding by what mishaps may befall us in consequence, than in trying to find some more uncommon sense on which we may act more securely. As I said in *Alps and Sanctuaries*: “Reasonable people will look with distrust upon too much reason.”

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### *Body, Money, and Soul*

The three most important things a man has are his body, his money, and his soul, and the bodies, moneys, and souls of his children and those near him and dear to him; yet the more reasonable a man is the more surely will he invest his money on the faith of his family broker, or banker, in securities over which he has practically no control; the more surely, if he is out of health, will he send for a doctor whom he takes on trust and whose qualifications he cannot examine; and the more surely will he avoid trying to get at the foundations of his belief on any subject. Again he will choose the school to which he will send his children mainly upon faith. So that, in the end, it comes to this that it is generally better for man to commit all his deepest and dearest interests to the hands of people of whom he can know directly but a very little, rather than be his own doctor, his own adviser in money matters, or his own priest. The common consent indeed of all who know most on these matters is that the less a man knows about any of them the better for him. And what is this but making a faith which lies deeper than reason the basis of all our most vital action?

### *Spiritual Axioms.*

To look at the matter from another point of view. Some two or three years ago I saw the following in *The Contemporary Review*:

"It is strange that scientific men, who would look upon any one as entirely unreasonable who disputed the axioms upon which all scientific reasoning depends, reject the idea that there are spiritual axioms resting upon exactly the same foundation—that is to say, that there are propositions concerning the unseen life which the general understanding of mankind recognizes as truth as soon as the meaning of the words is understood. Scientific reasoning rests on no stronger basis than this, for the axioms without which no single truth in science can be proved depend upon un-

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provable intuitions which are neither weaker nor stronger than the unprovable intuitions upon which man accepts spiritual revelations, and to disbelieve everything that cannot be proved without the intervention of intuitions is to submit to hopeless unbelief not less in science than in revelation.”<sup>1</sup>

### *The Christian Miracles*

This is perfectly just, and would be denied by none but fanatics. Faith is undoubtedly the well-spring from which all our action flows. When, however, the writer of the foregoing argues that we should therefore accept the Christian miracles, we cannot follow him. I do not deny that there is a grain of miracle, *i.e.*, of like causes producing slightly unlike effects, of small spontaneous generation, of minute somethings making rather a large nothing, and *vice versa*, in our every thought and action. We are all in fact founded upon an Irish bull of some sort; the writs which run in our seen kingdom issue from an unseen one about which all we know is that we know nothing about it except that in some way we spring from its loins and are its children. Nothing is impossible until we have got an incontrovertible first premise; till we have got this we think in vicious circles, and contradictions in terms, and miracles, and impossibilities, every moment of our lives. Granted, then, that the Christian miracles are possible, still they are not convenient: they do not fit in and come together with our ideas of sobriety and good judgement, but abide more readily among those of religious enthusiasm and the superstitions of well meaning but ignorant people. In that position we, therefore, leave them; without, nevertheless, for a moment denying that faith or common sense is the ultimate foundation of all we either think or do.

The worst of it is that uncommon sense does sometimes make such high profits, and that, indeed, it is the very foun-

<sup>1</sup> “Science and Revelation,” by Francis Peek (*Contemporary Review*, June 1882).

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dation of common sense itself which in every detail was, when it first came to the fore, uncommon. This is how it comes that we are all of us tempted to try our luck sometimes, no matter how prudently we may have resolved.

### *The Trackless Plain*

We are as people travelling by night over an almost trackless plain. On either side we can see the nearer objects more or less distinctly, but we can see nothing beyond. Nevertheless as long as we are on the track, such as it is, we are easy in our minds and know that practically we are safe. If once we get off it either through carelessness or willfulness we are almost sure to lose it altogether. There is neither wind nor star to steer by, we know not where we are, and grope on hands and knees among the roots of the tussocks to find some rut which may guide us back to our road. Even if we get on to it again we shall very likely find that we have turned round unawares, and have gone quietly back to the place we started from; if we do not find it we have no more voice in what shall happen. We may stray on till we die of cold and hunger, though often passing within a stone's throw of some place of refuge; or we may in the end reach some undiscovered but hospitable region and our footsteps may form the beginning of a track which will grow into a beaten road. There is no high road so broad and smooth and level but that it has grown up from a footpath, and no footpath that was not once tentative and tainted with speculation. It is of man that willeth, and it is not of man that willeth at one and the same time; we can only have absolute security or absolute hopelessness in death; and absolute death is just as impossible as absolute anything else. In the highest life there is still a little death, and in the lowest death still a little life.

### *No Safe Spot*

Sometimes it almost seems as if the Angel of Light which guides the world onward were transformed into the likeness

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of Satan, so plausibly does she lure people to desert places where their bones may whiten and warn off subsequent travellers. What, for example, can seem more reasonable or more promising than the endeavour to get rid of faith altogether, and find a solid irrefragable first premise which may be posited once and for ever as the foundation of all human reasoning? Surely there can be no gambling here. Our object in trying to get this is to abolish all further temptation to gamble. We are hunting for a spot of terra firma, which if we can get we shall be sounder than the soundest of our neighbours. True we must speculate a little in order to get our first premise; but surely, when once we have got it, we can make it the base of our operations and go on adding field to field and farm to farm till we may leave the whole universe to our heirs; whereas until we have got it what is the good of doing anything at all? What tenure have we? And without this what sane person will invest intellectual more than material capital?

So much has this will-o'-the-wisp of a single spot of absolutely unassailable ground been desired in all ages that, no matter how often we have been done, we let ourselves be done again, and presently find that we have gone a long way round only to reach a point in which we are less certain of our ground than when we started. We have been penny-wise in the matter of risk, and prove pound-foolish in the end; we have tried to get rid of faith altogether as involving uncertainty, and, behold, when our faith was dead, our reason was dead also.

### *The Lernaean Hydra*

Happily we can no more destroy all faith than we can destroy all life. Faith is like the Lernaean hydra; for every head we cut off, she grows two. The more we try to be certain beyond a certain point, the more uncertain we become. In vain do we double our stakes with each new venture. We are sure to come off losers in the end if we try to pit reason against faith. We seem to have got it nearly out when

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lol in a moment she is where she was or on even stronger ground. This irony pervades most things. So when a jam pot is broken and thrown away it becomes more and more useless and forgotten till, when it has lain hundreds of years, it is found and prized, and put in museums, and written about in magazines, and sold for ten times the price it would have fetched when new. Or as a poor old woman, with no means of living, falls lower and lower till she is at the very point to die, and on this becomes sublime.

### *The Sea, the Clouds, and the Rivers*

It may indeed be said that by giving the new to reason as its province we do in the end found even faith itself upon reason; inasmuch, as was implied above, everything must have been once. The answer is that though indeed faith must rest on reason, as much as reason on faith—these two being as the sea which feeds the clouds, which feed the rivers, which in their turn feed the sea—and though neither faith nor reason can claim priority any more than desire can claim it over power or *vice versa*, or than sea can, over rain drops or *vice versa*—and though, again, faith and reason pass into one another as gently as summer passes into winter, yet the two when fully developed are as unlike each other as the two seasons, or as the sea is unlike the clouds or rain drops. No one calls summer winter merely on the ground that one passes into the other without a break. So there is faith and there is reason, and it is in faith not reason that the basis of all our profounder instincts lies—that is to say, these profounder instincts represent settlements which should not be reopened and reconsidered but which should be taken for better or worse and the plastic future shaped accordingly. ■

### *The Provinces of Faith and Reason*

The fact that all faith was once begotten of reason does not make anything which we base on faith to be really after all based on reason.<sup>1</sup> For though faith was reason once it is

<sup>1</sup> [Cf. p. 141.]



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not so now. We might as well say that because ice was water once it must be water now or, as I said in *Unconscious Memory*, that because the glacier had its origin in snowflakes it is therefore snowflakes now. If we are to go back as far as the snowflakes, there is no reason why we should stop here; we might as well call the glacier a cloud at once, or an atmospheric phenomenon, or an aurora borealis, or a sunbeam or whatever else we choose. Common sense (which, as I said before, is a mode of faith) settles that when a change has proceeded to an extent of which common sense is itself the judge, the thing changed is to be called one thing and not another. Though the income of reason does indeed, on having been hoarded long enough, become converted into the capital of faith, and though both income and capital consist of money in the end, yet the two have grown so far apart that we cannot longer call them by the same name. There are, in fact, matters which are fit subjects for reason and demonstration, and others which though once doubtless within the province of reason have now long since passed into another category in which reason has no longer any lawful place but enters only to disturb—which have passed, in fact, from the stage of clergy to one of mother wit.

At the same time we readily allow that any theories of glacial action which took no account of the harmonics that still arise from snow as soon as the note "glacier" is struck; or of capital, which neglected the harmonics of income; or of faith which was deaf to the harmonics of reason, and *vice versa*, would be imperfect and ere long lead to confusion in our ideas. In spite, however, of this sop to Nemesis we contend that our present conscious reasoned beliefs (all, in fact, that belong to our distinctly intellectual life) are based on faiths which can no longer give account concerning themselves; and that we should not be ashamed of this, or appeal apologetically to reason, but take our stand more boldly upon the fact that faith is a sounder and less shifting foundation than reason can ever be.

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### *The Baffling "Why?"*

If we give chase to any reason we soon run it to ground in faith and can follow it no further. When we say we can show "why" such and such a thing is this or that we only mean that we can answer as many "whys" as we think are likely to be asked. All that any one can do is to stop his adversary's mouth; to bring about in one way or another that he shall not care to pursue the matter further. When there is a general consent not to pursue a matter further, whether from weariness or from whatever other cause, then we say that it is settled. But no one supposes that either side has gone back to the ultimate "why" which any one could ask if breath and pertinacity lasted. Every now and then people come forward and say they can do this and found a new religion on the strength of it; for a religion is only an attempt to posit a few first principles, just as every row and then people say they have discovered perpetual motion, but they never make way for long. On the other hand it is only very little of our faith--and that the least assured part of it--that we can run to ground in reason. Faith we find it, and faith we must leave it. We know it came up hand in hand with reason when we could first descry it upon the horizon of our thoughts; we know that reason and faith are as the hen and the egg, or man and woman, we cannot say which came first; therefore as in all such cases they are probably each derived from a common substratum of which we know nothing, and which is neither the one nor the other but which we see under certain circumstances as faith and under certain others as reason.

### *Faith the Soul and Reason the Body*

Whatever it may have been once, it is faith clearly enough now except upon the boundary where it passes into reason, and there can be no question that it is in what is clearly and indisputably faith and not in reason that all the deeper springs of our thought and action take their rise. Faith

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and reason are as sense and science, for which indeed they are little else than synonyms. Sense is the soul of science, and science the bodily manifestation of sense. Faith is a kind of spiritual memory which has the same unifying binding force upon reason which memory has upon the individual moments of our lives or the force of cohesion upon matter, and, to paraphrase Professor Hering, as our bodies would split up into the atoms of which they are composed if it were not for the force of gravity, so our reasons would split up into as many fragments as the circumstances which gave rise to them if it were not for the unifying, binding force of faith.

### *Words are Metaphors*

One, and perhaps the chief, source of the confusion in our ideas concerning faith and reason is that we have fallen under the bondage of the words whereby we express these things and see Faith and Reason too much as the painters and sculptors have represented them to us. We could not get on without metaphor and allegories—indeed all words are only metaphors and allegories in disguise that stand in the same relation to the thing they signify as that thing does to some unknown thing behind it, but we should avoid being wedded to any single metaphor; we must keep a whole harem of them, so to speak, if we would not fall under the dominion of any single one, and at present the sculpturesque metaphor has things too much its own way; it wants correcting by half a dozen others.

### *The Kingdom of Heaven*

- Wherein, then, it may be asked does that faith consist which, rather than reason, should be the foundation of all our superstructure? If you talk about faith—say faith in what. But surely it is in the very essence of a faith that it cannot be cribbed, cabined, and confined within the words that minister to reason. Faith cannot be defined clearly even in thought. It is only the extremes of Christianity, c

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the one hand, or positivism, on the other, which will attempt to formulate their faiths articulately. Our faith is as the Kingdom of Heaven; it is within us; it is as the secret of our existence which cannot be read without destroying the existence itself. To one man it is one thing, and to another another. As far as I personally am concerned I know of no better faith now than I knew of when I wrote *Life and Habit* nearly ten years ago—I mean than the faith which has found its most adequate expression in the music of Handel, the painting of Giovanni Bellini, and the thirteenth chapter of St. Paul's First Epistle to the Corinthians.

*The Summum Bonum*

**T**O REPEAT: NOTHING BUT FAITH OR COMMON sense can tell us how to classify—when to insist rather on differences, and when rather on resemblances; and common sense can seldom give grounds for the conclusions she arrives at; she can utter her decisions in words, but she is, for the most part, like the lower animals in forming them, and can articulate none but the more superficial of the reasons which lead her to her conclusions.

Her decision is clearly enough given that we should not search for absolute unalloyed truth, nor for something which shall at all times go on all fours comfortably with itself. Absolute truth is too hard to catch, and good for too little if it were caught. I have seen with pleasure a passage in the late Mr. James Hinton's *Life in Nature*<sup>1</sup> (p. 50) where this is very neatly put and treated as a matter of course about which no argument was needed. "I do not know," says Professor Le Conte, from whom Mr. Hinton is quoting, "if this view is held by the scientific minds of the present day as a fact, but it certainly is generally regarded as the most convenient way of representing all the phenomena of animal life, and, as such, has passed into the best literature of the age."

The writer of the above justly holds convenience as the *summum bonum*, and surely philosophy is for man, not man for philosophy. We have no concern with "is." There is no "is" about it. A thing to us only "is" what it will give us least trouble to think it is, and we have no concern or interest in it except in its relation to ourselves; we do not care what it may be to something which is not us; we are our own department; we have no business with any other. All we need ask about anything is what way of looking at it will "come best together with" and fit most comfortably in with a great number of other and very varied conceptions which we have got to stow away somehow, and on which we and our ancestors—no matter whether they came by them

<sup>1</sup> London, Smith, Elder and Co., 1862.

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honestly in the first instance or not—have spent so much time, money, and trouble that we will not now be robbed of them without fighting for our own.

### *Goods in a Store*

Not only is the arrangement of our ideas as much a matter of convenience as the arrangement of goods in a druggist's or a draper's store, but the difficulties that have to be overcome in either case present many close and remarkable analogies. In either we must be able to remember what we have got, and be able to lay our hands on it readily. In either the results of forgetfulness or mislaying through mistake are closely analogous—the mental state produced by being unable to call to mind where we put this or that resembles very closely the mental state produced by inability to remember where it was we saw such a passage and what, exactly, the passage was. In either case we must be specialists and yet generalists at the same time, but on the whole we must keep to a given line of business; and we must have each article accessible in proportion to the frequency with which it is wanted, and, if we do not keep it in stock we should know who does, and where to find it best and most easily. And we should not keep articles near together which will hurt each other, thus we should not keep the garlic next the lavender, nor think that Gallio discovered the rotation of the earth upon its own axis.

I will pursue these analogies no further, but many more will doubtless present themselves readily to the reader and suggest to him as was said above that the spiritual and the material must be in reality two sides of one and the same thing<sup>1</sup> of which we know nothing except that we see it, sometimes as mind and sometimes as matter though each is always alloyed a little with the other. But here, too, the same old cross meets us; for when we think of these analogies they carry us away with them till we are on the very point of uniting mind and matter and classifying them

<sup>1</sup> See *Conscious Matter*, by W. S. Duncan.

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together; and then in a second while our back is turned they fly asunder and are as far apart as ever; nevertheless if we try to separate them we find them in each other's arms at the very moment when we think we had got them finally asunder.

But whatever view be taken of the relations between mind and matter the metaphor of a mental storehouse has long been so completely accepted that we may pursue it safely. If we arrange our ideas in one way we find them work easily and our action is edifying: if in another, they fall in confusion and our action is impotent. The convenience of least disturbing vested interests, and at the same time of finding room for new articles that are in demand, is the fittest object to strive after, and there is none more difficult; for, hard as truth is to hit, convenience is often just as hard or harder.

It is easy to say that if we would arrange our ideas conveniently we must classify them correctly; but how can we classify them till we know what will be and what will not be convenient? And how can we tell what will be and what will not be convenient till we know what we like, and what we do not like? The fallacy lies in supposing that we know this, whereas in nine doubtful cases out of ten this is the very point to be decided. When we think to solve the riddle, "What is Truth?" by giving the answer, "Convenience," we are like Job who, to the question, "Where shall wisdom be found?" replied that it was the fear of the Lord and the departing from evil. It is *ignotum per ignotius*. Still in either case we know of no better answer, and in either case, whether the answer is satisfying or no, we manage to rub along.

### *Knowing what gives us Pleasure*<sup>1</sup>

It is here that we touch ground as nearly as we can touch it at all. Tell us what we really like and want, and we shall know what to think and how to arrange our thoughts; but this, which looks such a simple matter, and which we think or pretend we think we understand so thoroughly, is in

<sup>1</sup> [Cf. pp. 211-226 of this volume.]

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reality the most difficult alike of arts and duties, and one, moreover, which of all others we are most ready to shirk, or throw on to some one else's shoulders. People will pay almost any money to almost any man, woman, or thing, to be saved the trouble of finding this out—or rather to be told that they know it—or, perhaps still more exactly, to make other people think they know it. This is the rationale of art critics and reviewers. Not that these know what they like better than we do ourselves, but some one must say he likes or dislikes something or nobody would know what to think at all; and people do not care whether the critics know or do not know, all they care about is being told something by some one with some show of authority, so that they may flatter themselves that they have got the results of thought without the trouble of thinking. If they can get this they are ready enough to pay for it, and as long as there are those that will pay there will be those that will take. The art critic and the reviewer are in fact like the ice to which faith was compared on an earlier page. We may skate, so to speak, upon them with impunity provided we do not knock holes in them to see how thick they are. And yet we may knock a good many holes even in the critics and they will not break up.

Very few people care about liking anything at all; they are generally a little more lively about their dislikes, but not much. The main object of the greater number of cultured people is to conceal as far as may be from themselves and others that they do not know what they think or like upon any subject, except eating and drinking and often not even here. Let any one who doubts this go to the National Gallery and watch the people sitting before the new *Raffaelle*.<sup>1</sup>

They do not actively dislike the picture; still less do they actively like it; who can? What is there to like? The technique and manner of painting was not the strong point of "the prince of painters." Drawing? The drawing is

<sup>1</sup> He means the *Ansidei Raffaelle*, which was bought in 1885. There is a note about it in the *Note-Books*.—H.F.J.



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very bad. Feeling? There is obedience to all the conventions of the religious art of the time, but there is nothing more. Character? There is none. Thoroughness? There is not a picture in the National Gallery more scamped throughout. Nobody should knock holes in Raffaele to see how thick he is. There is a heavy thaw set in upon him. What people like, so far as they like anything at all, is what they bring, not what they find, and they bring what the papers tell them to. They are not wrong in this, on the contrary they are acting on faith rather than reason, and the chances are that they are right. Where they are wrong is in thinking it necessary to say that they know what they like. We often hear people say of pictures or music that they neither know nor care what is good or bad, but they know very well what they like. Any one with a reasonable amount of experience will know that people only protest in this way when they are frightened.

### *Opinion*

Opinion, so far as I have been able to observe it, is formed thus. The men of culture meet together, and smoke, and say: "Oh that the public would tell us what they would have!" And the public meet together, and look bored, and say: "Oh that the men of culture would tell us what we should want!"

The cultured do not wait to speak nor the public to hear beyond that the first want money and the second want a straight tip for the purchase of a little Holy Ghost cheap. And thus opinion is formed by small spontaneous generations out of nothing, or at any rate out of nothing *qua* us. It was not thus in the days (I write without prejudice) of Isaiah or Jeremiah. We cannot fancy these gentlemen meeting together and sneering at Ezekiel (if he was their contemporary) or going into ecstasies over some one-chapter prophet like Obadiah, as having written "really the finest thing, you know, since the sixth commandment." Nor yet can we fancy them as sipping their Château Joppa, and saying:

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“Oh that the Jewish public would tell us how it would have its ears scratched, and we would scratch them!”

They did not see things in this light, but then they were not men of culture and had not had the advantage of a university education. They said out what they were hot to say, and as a natural consequence got stoned. But people must take stoning as it comes. Stoning is like success during a man's own lifetime, a contradiction in terms, as going at once for very much and very little. So does everything else; nothing is so unimportant as not to have importance of some sort—and nothing so important as to matter more than for a longer or shorter time. But stoning or no stoning, the prophets entered forthwith into a life which has not yet failed them, and they got this life not for what they said—which was not remarkable either for style or substance—but because they said what they had to say without fear of what man could do unto them.<sup>1</sup>

Knowing what we like depends so closely on knowing what is convenient—the two acting and reacting incessantly on one another—that if the one is hard to hit the other is sure to be so also; and, as a man can never be sure of knowing what he likes except in respect of a very few subjects, and not even here till he has had much experience, the substitution of convenience for truth as our highest aim will not do much to lighten our difficulties; still it lightens them a little, and makes things easier also, because the pursuit of convenience holds out more prospect of immediate personal reward, which both interests and stimulates to exertion. We

<sup>1</sup> On the verso of the preceding page in the ms. Butler made these notes evidently with the intention of incorporating their substance in a re-writing:

“Perhaps it would have been better for them and no worse for us if they had not been stoned (if they were stoned) but they did what they did and they made their mark. The prophets were not cultured nor yet good-tempered; it was their good faith that gave them life. The assertion that temper is all in all wants tempering as much as any other.”—

—H.F.J.

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must of course be careful not to aim at absolute convenience; this would be as complete a chimera as absolute truth; we should only aim at as much convenience as is convenient. We should not try to think for all time any more than to build for all time; this is one of the commonest of dangers. Men strive after fixed immutable arrangements of ideas much as the French strive after a written constitution, and with much the same result. We should also of course remember that convenience is manifold according to the end in view; so that, whereas the first joint of the thumb may be a better inch measure for some purposes than the most perfect that can be manufactured, yet for others the most perfect is imperfect, and nothing less than the most perfect is of any use at all. So again, having regard to the carrying on of an undertaker's business, it answers very well to consider life and death as two distinct things and to neglect the fact that there is no life without a little death in it, nor yet any death without a little life in it, while, at the same time, for purposes of speculative enquiry the vulgar conception of life and death is too crude to be of service.

### *Glaciers*

It is hard to know what is convenient, but it is hard also to know whether it is convenient even to try and find out whether a thing is convenient or no. Take the question of the solidity or fluidity of ice. What question can seem more barren? The question is no sooner asked than answered, or so it appears at first sight. What is more solid than a block of ice? It is hard and firm; it chips like glass on being struck; no matter how high we heap it it shows no sign of running while the frost lasts. Is this behaving like a fluid? What, indeed, is solid enough to be called solid, if ice is not? And what, again, is to become of classification, and hence of the power of speech at all (for all words are based on classification) if such marked resemblances as those between ice and other solids are to be set aside in favour of calling ice a fluid? Surely this is one of the questions which

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common sense has settled once and for ever. Let us call it a fluid when we can no longer skate upon it or when a fish can swim through it.

Besides, if we allow such a question to be discussed at all, and even if, for a quiet life, we give in and call ice a fluid, what reason have we to think that we should have seen the end of the discussion? Shall we not ere long again be told that we were wrong, and that, after all, it is not ice that we should see as a fluid, but water as a kind of solid? Let us have done, we exclaim, with such unprofitable discussion, and talk about things we really care about, such as health, long life for ourselves and our children, money, our opinions on religious matters, and so forth.

This sounds well, but the answer will have already occurred to the reader that we cannot get very far with the things we really care for without being brought up by many of these very questions that at first sight seem to have so little to do with them. Thus for example the question how we shall add to the average long life of the human race involves that of the principle which underlies longevity; this leads at once to heredity; this to the question whether living forms are mutable or no under changed conditions, and here we have run full tilt against the glacial theory, and can settle nothing till we have decided whether ice is to be a fluid or a solid. For if ice is not a fluid the whole theory which modern science has constructed concerning the glacial period is upset. Ice could never have done what it is alleged to have done if it did not flow; and, if the glacial period goes, then half our reasons for thinking that widely different kinds of animals and plants have had a common ancestor go too, and we may find ourselves at issue with our ablest modern philosophers on the matter of the permanence of organic forms.

Nor does the matter rest here. The permanence of organic forms affects the question of the fixity of the basis on which ethics and all questions of right and wrong rest; for if animal forms are immutable a corresponding unchangeableness in

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the rightness or wrongness of actions may well be maintained also; but no one who holds that body and instincts vary will suppose the moral nature of any action to be more constant than the organism which is to execute it. If lions and men, for example, had a common ancestor their moral standards must have diverged as their bodily organizations became more and more divergent, till they have now got so wide apart that many things are very wicked in a lion that are not wicked in men, and wicked in men that are even laudable in lions: much smaller differences indeed than those existing between men and lions will so change the moral nature of an action that it will become absurd to judge it in respect of any other environment than its own. It comes therefore in the end to this—that what we shall think of life, of the continuity of our existence here and hereafter, of death, of God, and of a multitude of other matters depends to no small extent on what we think of glaciers. If ice flows, then we may say for certain that the basis of ethics moves, though more slowly than man can watch it.

We look then at ice more closely, and examine it not only as retailed to us in ponds and puddles, but as it appears in the warehouses of those wholesale dealers, the great mountain ranges where millions and millions of tons are stored both summer and winter. Watch the glacier as it descends from some high Alpine reservoir of ice. It falls down the mountain side with a current which nothing can resist and which shows it to be of very different consistency from the rocks between which it flows. Granted it is not a liquid like water, still less however is it a solid like granite. As soon as we have seen a glacier—I was going to say we perceive that ice is a fluid, no matter how hard a lump of a few pounds weight may be, but it is impossible to forget that people looked at glaciers for thousands of years before they could see that the ice was flowing. So impossible is it to tear up questions by the roots without breaking their roots and those of all the questions near them. And so impossible is it to say, without knowing what neighbouring

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roots we may or may not break, whether a question can be stirred usefully or not.

### *Mental Earthquakes*

Do what we will our ideas will sometimes fail, or collide more violently than we like. There are so many of them and they have such varied relations. It is like trying to drive a thousand wild horses abreast at one time; while we are attending to one, another is making all sorts of mischief elsewhere. Shocks, and cataclysms, and mental earthquakes are inevitable; but if there is one thing which stands out more clearly from the doctrine of evolution than another it is that they should only be upon a small scale. They should be there, for it is in them that life and consciousness lie; but they should be small and be to our mental edifice as the laying on of a brick, and not as the impact of a cannon ball. We must be jarred neither too little nor too much. The essence of life is in memory of the shocks we feel, and in the power to classify what the memory has retained; the essence of death is forgetfulness or absence of memory. So the ancients called their river of death Lethe, "the river of forgetfulness." Forgetfulness may arise because there is either too little or too much to be remembered. Growth is due to assimilation; assimilation to ability to substitute one set of memories for another; so, when we eat a hen, that which had heard and remembered the hen's version of the story hitherto now hears and remembers ours, and says it sees now of course that the hen was quite wrong and we perfectly right all the time. When we can get anything to do this to us we like it very much, and say it agrees with us; when it either will not or cannot understand us and refuses to be converted we say, as I pointed out in *Alps and Sanctuaries*, that it disagrees with us, and do not waste time and trouble on it again. Substitution of memories is the swallowing up of one set of vibrations by another whose characteristics are so nearly similar that, after travelling together for a short space, the fresher and stronger effaces the weaker, this last

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becoming amalgamated with it and showing henceforth only as an accession of strength to the stronger. Vibrations imply shocks or mental earthquakes. If they are on a small scale only, and of such characteristics as to come into easy agreement with the vibrations already existing within us, then we derive accession of strength from them, and thrive. If, on the other hand, they are too many and violent they put a stop to and efface the vibrations already existing within us, neither helping nor being helped; so that ere long both they and we have to take a new departure. In any case, however, it is the *convenience*, or coming togetheriness, of the vibrations of things which concerns us most vitally. And in any case, therefore, it is in temper, sympathy, and kindly genial feeling that the highest genius is shown, all else being not only worthless but destructive.

*Two Views*

THE CONVENIENCE OF THE COMMON OPINION that life and death are two antagonistic things with nothing in common is sufficiently shown by its long prevalence. It is indeed true that if we look at life and death abstractedly, without regard to the relations in which they stand to other things the current opinion involves serious jar and contradiction in terms; if, therefore, life and death stood alone we should tune them juster—as just, in fact, as we could get them. But they do not stand alone; there is money; there is action of a hundred kinds; there is religious opinion, whether sound or superstitious; indeed, there is nothing with which the question what is life and what is death has not more or less direct relation; and we cannot, as Burke so finely said in his *French Revolution*, regard any matter connected with human conduct or human affairs “in all the nakedness and solitude of metaphysical abstraction.” We find it convenient to modulate freely from one key to another; hence we tune life more sharp than true, and death more flat, making the living more living than it is, inasmuch as we ignore the death that abounds in it; and tuning the dead more dead than truth, inasmuch as we ignore the nascent life with which it teems.

*The Thin End of the Wedge*

To us in our ordinary moments a living being is all living, and a dead all dead, this being the distribution of the error which common sense has deemed most convenient in view of the varied interests involved. We are not in the habit of thinking of the living as in great part dead, nor of the dead as in great part living. Living bodies have more of a “scientific frontier” than most things, or at least their frontier is so well marked as to make it unwise to tamper with it; we are not likely to get a more convenient one, and should fight shy of allowing death to effect a lodgement within the living body, or life to make even a temporary



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dash or sortie out of it. Once unsettle a boundary, and good-bye peace. The new cannot command assent as the old did; and, as even the most perfect classification must be, after all, arbitrary, there is none against which more or less plausible exception cannot be taken, and if the old was not justified in reason, so neither will the new, if any one chooses to be malignant. See what came of it when we let Buffon talk about the ass and the horse having possibly had a common ancestor. What could be more innocent? But we know what the thin ends of wedges are and how much easier it is to let them in than to get them out again. This was the thinnest of thin ends inserted with the most tender regard for our feelings; but we had no sooner let it in than we found we stood committed to the whole theory of evolution in its extreme development, and it was no longer the horse and the ass but the ass and ourselves who were to have a common ancestor. Buffon himself with the most engaging candour told us how it would be. We were being humbugged right and left, but there was no deception. So deftly indeed did he warn us against admitting his premises that we admitted them without a murmur; and then, of course, he drove his wedge home. People never get the thin end of the wedge into us without intending to drive it home. We should never so much as look at a wedge, and if in doubt whether this or that is a wedge or no we should ask the clergyman of the parish.

### *Extremes*

But however this may be, as regards life and death we have hitherto been in the habit of considering all that is within the four corners, so to speak, of a living body, as alive, and all within the four corners of a dead body as dead. We have also been in the habit of considering that there is a short time, never lasting more than a few minutes, during which the living becomes dead, and that the act of dying is one and indivisible, being confined to the moment of death, and not being carried on for days or even weeks (not

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to say years on the life side of death) on either side of what we commonly regard as death.

So long as we stick to this we are safe, but if we let people say that so much as the end of an overgrown finger-nail is non-living before we have snipped it off with a pair of scissors—if, in fact, we allow the non-living to effect even the very smallest lodgement within the living—then the same old encroachments and driving home of wedges will begin again, and we shall have to let life effect much such another settlement in the dead body as we allowed to death in the living. On this, before we know where we are, we shall have the soul and the life beyond the grave upon us again in developments at once more extreme and more unintelligible than they were before—and it will be shown, with a logic which those only who make logic their servant, not their master, can resist, that, as in the midst of life we are in death, so in the midst of death we are in life. The old song summed up the old view of the matter, very sufficiently by saying:

“When she lived she lived in clover  
And when she died she died all over.”

And indeed there is a fine, rude, simple, Norman arch-like severity about this way of looking at life and death which will enable it to weather many a storm yet. This is the view we all take and shall continue to take when we go about such ordinary matters as buying beef or mutton, or, indeed, coming into a legacy; but as there are kitchen coals at 15s. a ton and best Wallsend screened at 29s., so with philosophy, we want one for kitchen use and another for the library. For the library the roughness of the common-sense way of looking at life and death is felt daily to cause more and more intolerable jar in our thoughts as the consequences of the doctrine of descent with modification become more clearly realized. As the note of evolution has become louder and clearer, so the necessity has grown for tempering life and death differently when the two are struck together; what is

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sometimes (but not well) called an enharmonic note<sup>1</sup> in respect of them has become a *sine qua non* with all who, while desiring to retain their freedom of modulation, feel the absolute necessity for a juster intonation.

### Harmonics

There are many of course who will feel nothing of the discord caused by the rudeness of the present conceptions of life and death. "Granted," they will say, "that from everything there arise harmonics of its opposite, so that when the note of life is struck the harmonics of death are sounded, and that the harmonics of life arise upon the note of death; granted that we can tear nothing up by the roots without bringing up the roots of other things along with them; still these harmonics and savours of opposites must be neglected by sensible people, as too full of *finesse* for those whose time is money." The answer is as already above implied, that if the cone of evolution had remained what it was we should not want an additional note for life and death; and, as also was above implied, that we have nothing to say to people whose time is money. Books of a purely speculative, philosophic character on the one hand and money on the other hand do not know one another. Such books must be written by—as the main political power of a country should be vested in—those who are either above money or below it. They are written for the library not for the office—for the cloister not for the world. Of course, the cloister rings with harmonics of the world—sometimes distinguishable even by the unassisted ear and yielding a tunc of very pretty mundane import—but the more these har-

<sup>1</sup> He is thinking of the "enharmonic notes" which Handel put into the Foundling organ mentioned *ante*, p. 114. "The organ built by Parker in 1769 for the chapel of the Foundling Hospital, was specially remarkable for having four quarter tones in each octave, or, in the words of a writer in the *European Magazine* for February 1799, 'Four demitones, and other niceties not occurring in other organs'" (Grove's *Dictionary of Music and Musicians* (1907), article "Organ").—H.F.J.

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monics are excluded the purer will be the tone. Here, however, the old cross meets us—for when we have got our tone pure it is so lean and mortified that there is nothing left to hear. A note to be powerful must reek with harmonics—but enough of these harmonics to keep the sound well alive will probably get in though we do all we can to keep them out. A philosopher is shorn of his strength if considerations of money, or prudence, or immoderate utilitarianism of any kind affects either what he says or what he does not say. I shall therefore without further apology proceed to consider the more obvious points that suggest themselves as modifying the simple views of life and death to which we have been accustomed hitherto.

### *Debatable Ground*

And first as to whether death is to be allowed a lodgement within the living body or no. This question is scarcely asked before it is answered. All readers will admit some parts of the body to be more living than others; and the moment a more and a less have entered into the matter we can see what is coming.

Suppose, then, we make a stand at the outset and deny that any one part of the body is more living than another; then we must say that the thick skin on the heel, or a corn, or a finger-nail, or the hair on our heads is as living and sensitive as the brain itself. Let a finger-nail grow a quarter of an inch long, draw a pencil mark an eighth of an inch from the end of the nail, and then cut the nail off where the mark was drawn; the part that is cut off should be dead as soon as it is cut off, but was as living as the brain up to that moment. As long as the nail was uncut it was as living as the brain, another moment and it is absolutely without life; nevertheless we can see no change in it; we suffered no pain when it was cut off. Is it necessary to waste further words upon such a supposition?

Hardly. But the only alternative is to allow that the grey matter in the brain is more living than the end of the finger-

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nail. That is to say, the end of the nail is more dead than the grey matter in the brain. How much more dead, then, is the nail? and what is being dead—so that we may tell more dead from less? If these questions are answered by those who heed nothing of issues, it will be admitted that the nail when cut off is dead matter; and surely also it will be admitted that it was much the same just before it was cut off as after; that if, in fact, it was so little part of us that we could cut it off with no more pain than if we were cutting a lead pencil, and be glad to get rid of it, it was virtually dead before we cut it off.

The principle then is admitted that the whole of a living body is not necessarily alive, this conclusion being drawn from facts within the reach of every one. But once admit that any part of a living body can be dead, and where is the line to be drawn? What parts of the living body are living, and what non-living? The dead nail passes into the quick nail very subtly. Where does the life end and the death begin? It is no use giving us a sixteenth of an inch or so and saying, "here." A sixteenth of an inch is a huge tract of debatable land if we look at it through a microscope. If we are not to see the living nail as passing into the non-living by imperceptible gradations we must have a much cleaner cut limit than one of the sixteenth part of an inch, and this cannot be given us. So, if we hold the end of the nail, though still uncut, to be non-living, we must hold also that the living passes so subtly that no sharp line can be drawn between them. And this is what most people would say upon the matter if compelled to say anything at all, but they do not like even uniting life and death by a tract of dusky debatable ground; even though they let death effect a lodgement within the living body they still want within the limits of the body to keep life to itself and death to itself. Granted that linking two things does not destroy their points of difference, still there is a savour of unification about letting them run into one another which people do not like. When they let death into the living body they had no

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intention of sapping the party wall between life and death and finding in the end that life and death were not fundamentally two things, but only two different sides of one and the same thing—or, to use the language of science, differentiations of a common substratum. It was not that there was to be no party wall, but that the wall had been wrongly placed and should have been put within the body and not outside it.

### *Protoplasm*

Where, then, would they put it? For the moment they draw the line at protoplasm. Protoplasm was first made fashionable in England by Professor Huxley's address on "The Physical Basis of Mind" delivered at Edinburgh in 1868. This lecture was widely circulated. Protoplasm continued to engage more and more attention till it attained its zenith in the summer and autumn of 1879. In that year it was the subject of Professor Allman's address to the British Association. Professor Allman made life and protoplasm co-extensive by saying, "Wherever there is life from its highest to its lowest manifestations there is protoplasm; wherever there is protoplasm there is life." This comes to saying, as Professor Huxley had said already, that life is a property of protoplasm, and that there can be no life without protoplasm. It comes, in fact, to saying where there is protoplasm there is life, where there is no protoplasm there is no life; all the protoplasmic parts of the body are living, and all the non-protoplasmic parts are dead.

So Dr. Andrew Wilson also in 1879 wrote: "Protoplasm is the true and only medium by which life is exhibited,"<sup>1</sup> and again, "Apart from the presence of protoplasm life is unknown to exist. It is seen constituting the essential parts of animals and plants from the highest to the lowest."<sup>2</sup> Again: "Life is a property of protoplasm . . . such," continues Dr. Wilson vauntingly, "is the latest product of scientific thought and research"; and then he says that "the forces

<sup>1</sup> *Gentleman's Magazine*, Oct. 1879.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

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which make protoplasm are regarded as those which make life. Every living being has protoplasm as the essential matter of every living element of its structure.”<sup>1</sup>

On an earlier page of the article just quoted from Dr. Wilson had said: “Bone, in its *essential* and *living* parts,” thereby implying that bone had non-essential and non-living parts (which, by the way, are all that make the bone a bone and not a jelly) for Dr. Wilson clearly means that the protoplasm which permeates the Haversian canals is the true and living part of the bone, the bony part not being bone at all—nor, strictly speaking, part of the body except in so far as the oyster shell is part of the oyster. It is plain, therefore, that he took Dr. Allman, whom he quotes and by whose address he is evidently inspired, *au pied de la lettre* and regarded the protoplasmic parts of the body as living and the non-protoplasmic as dead.

I myself, I regret to say, swallowed the bait Professor Huxley had laid for us, and in this same year, 1879, only a short time before Professor Allman’s address, wrote some articles on God for *The Examiner*<sup>2</sup> which carried the matter to its legitimate conclusion and said in effect, “then God is protoplasm” as being the one common source and basis of life throughout the animal and vegetable kingdoms. Then the protoplasm boom came to an end and as I said in *Unconscious Memory* I have observed that protoplasm has for some time not been buoyant.<sup>3</sup> Nevertheless the scientific

<sup>1</sup> *Gentleman’s Magazine*, Oct. 1879.

<sup>2</sup> [See pp. 1-50 of this volume.]

<sup>3</sup> “I have noticed, however, that protoplasm has not been buoyant lately in the scientific market” (*Unconscious Memory*, ch. 13, Shrewsbury Edition, p. 199). Butler inserted these words in the extracts from *Unconscious Memory* which he included in *Selections from Previous Works* published in 1884. They do not occur in the original edition of the book, 1880, nor in the editions of 1910 and 1920. There is more about protoplasm in chapters 8 and 9 of *Luck, or Cunning?* first published in 1887; and chapter 9 concludes thus: “They [*i.e.*, the scientific writers] dropped protoplasm, as I have said, in some haste with the autumn of 1879.”—H.F.J.

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world has not deserted protoplasm, and if obliged to speak at all declares, as in an article just published on Protoplasm in the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* (ninth edition, June 1885), that "it is the living matter from which all kind of living beings are formed and developed, and to the properties of which all their functions are ultimately referred." I have, moreover, enquired personally from some of the best living authorities on the subject and am assured that the view taken in 1871 is still substantially orthodox. The woody part, for example, of a tree being regarded as used up, dead, and spent protoplasm, the protoplasm in the cells of the bark and leaves being held to be the only living part.

So important, however, is it to understand exactly what the protoplasmists intended and what should follow if their position is allowed them that I will reserve fuller consideration of their opinions for the following chapter.

[Here the ms. breaks off.]



## A SELECTION FROM THE NOTES

### CONSCIOUSNESS

WHAT CAN SEEM MORE UNCONSCIOUS than a piece of living brain? Why may not a stone then?

A body of consciousness.

Everything is conscious but some things make more fuss about their consciousness than others.

Nothing can look more unconscious than an egg.

All phenomena will have to go the way of ghosts and dreams.

If you say "Hallelujah" to a cat, etc.

What is meant by "New"? Consider this and you will be in a mess before you know where you are.

### CONVENIENCE

Classification depends on sympathy—on knowing what most men will feel—what will be most comfortable—what will kill most St. Georges.<sup>1</sup>

Any fool can tell the truth, but it takes, etc.<sup>2</sup>

The pleasure of love is that it is the one place where you may let yourself go and feel as strongly as you like.

If you feel strongly you must persecute.

The one serious conviction that a man should have is that nothing should be taken too seriously.

Nature, like a conjurer, to be watched away from her fuss.

### A THING

is not what we commonly think it, a mere object—say, a stone; this is but as the physical expression of the thing—its first name wherewith the senses express it; as its verbal name is the name by which they express their sense of this physical expression. The Thing is the harmonious expres-

<sup>1</sup> Cf. "The Country of the People who are above Suspicion" (*Memoir*, i, 350-351).—H.F.J.

<sup>2</sup> This, when he spoke it, used to conclude: "but it takes a damned clever fellow to tell a good lie," and I daresay that somewhere it occurs in his printed works in some such form.—H.F.J.

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sion of the ideas of which this thing is the sensible expression with the other ideas in its vicinity.

See a note on atoms, unity, and the universe.

Nonsense. Drawing Lines. Knowledge is Power.

So with beginnings—to have a beginning and not to have one are equally inconvenient. All expressions are courtesy titles only.

Nothing does come out of nothing and does not come out of nothing. For though it does not, according to absolute truth, come out of nothing, it does come out of nothing *qua* us; that is to say, out of stuff too small and too attenuated for us to be able to know anything about it. The imperceptible *is* nothing *qua* us.

### NOTES ON DEATH FROM MY COMMONPLACE BOOK

The full and certain hope that there is no resurrection.

Its main trouble is that it is an end. All ends are unpleasant. Suppose birth the end of life and *vice versa*. Fancy beginning life as a corpse and ending as an ovum! Fancy ending with a happy childhood!

Occasional thoughts of death give zest to life. *Si vis vitam, para mortem*.

We fear death because we do not know what it is.

Make peers of people after their death.<sup>1</sup>

Death and Identity: if identity survives embryonic changes, it survives death.

My Montreal article.<sup>2</sup>

It is the breaking of the wave whose water is absorbed into the sea of life.

As if the natural disinclination to die were not enough, we have given people a vested interest in the terrors of death—to wit, priests.

A man said he should like to hear the original polka on his death-bed.

<sup>1</sup> This might have been classified for *Erewhon Revivited*:—H.F.J.

<sup>2</sup> I know nothing about this.—H.F.J.

## Collected Essays

### DESIGN

All success is built from a scaffolding of conceit.

### GOD

The invention of Him as a moral ruler was like the inventing Him as a material creator—to save trouble to the dominant party.

God is the last witch.

No dragons to be killed. Perhaps not; but there are the Saint Georges.<sup>1</sup>

How can we love him if we fear him? If perfect love casteth out fear, even imperfect fear casteth out love.

God is a respecter of persons. All men equal before God. The germ of truth underlying this.

Sensible people will wait till He is less enigmatic, etc.

God had rather people were a little too bad than a little too good.

Men of science are about his path and about his bed, etc.

### INDIVIDUALITY

A baby is a parasitic growth upon its mother. It is the mother continuing to grow and to bud.

To live a greatly changed life is near to living henceforth as someone else.

A man makes another a process of himself by instructing him.

We should see our cells less as "us" or our servants more. And Rothschild's kitchen-maid; tools and departments. Suffering from a diseased solicitor.<sup>2</sup>

Man is only a great number of amoebas, most of them dreadfully prejudiced in favour of this or that.

<sup>1</sup> Cf. again "The Country of the People who are above Suspicion" (*Memoir*, i, 350, 351).—H.F.J.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. "Croesus and his Kitchen-Maid," *Note-Books*; and "Croesus's Kitchen-Maid," pp. 257-267 of this volume.—H.F.J.

## *Life and Habit, vol. 2*

### ON KNOWING WHAT GIVES US PLEASURE<sup>1</sup>

People talk as though this were an easy matter, etc. So with duty. It is harder to find out one's duty than to do it.

We know this so little because we are so little accustomed to try.

Find the inception of this and you will find that of life.

The poet and the prophet show us our hearts.

No greater proof that a man knows nothing upon any subject than to hear him say he knows what he likes.

Better watched in the development of music than in anything else.

### LIFE

An affair of being more frightened than hurt.

Like derivations, springs from corruption.

A persona, or person, is only a mask. It is the mask that dies.

Life and Death like "chronic" and "temporary"—both expressions for measuring time, but one a long time the other a short.

Leaving the question how Life and Sense arose, let us observe how they act now.

Life like money—if used at all it will go sooner or later.

Life and Death the extremes of something which is neither one nor the other.

The struggle for life is a struggle to assert our own opinion.

If you can find the secret of any change, the secret of life and death is before you.

### MIND AND MATTER

Functions one of another, and so also organ and instinct. See *Unconscious Memory*.

We can conceive of neither without a little of the other. And so with every adjective in the dictionary, it has its harmonics of antithesis.

<sup>1</sup> Cf. pp. 211-226 of this volume.—H.F.J.

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We use the word cram for mental food as well as material.

'The Amsterdam canal was twisted awry by a tornado of private interests.

Our ideas of matter more definite (so we think) than those of mind.

No thought is perfect and reproductive, till it is crossed with another which differs from it, any more than any animal is.

Want and organ; the want commits suicide through the organ.

Mind and matter mutually create one another and commit suicide through one another.

There can be no physical difference without change of mind and no mental difference without change of matter.

You cannot remember *anything* without something to put you in mind of something.

We should see a universal substance which, in a statical state is matter and in a dynamical state is mind, but which in either case contains a little of the other.

The living rock.

Peccant matter means peccant mind.

### MISCELLANEOUS

All men equal before God. If this is true God is less discerning than is supposed. The sole truth which this contains.

There is no such change as changelessness under changed conditions.

Connect the difficulty of knowing our likes and dislikes with the beginnings of life.

'We say we "take" the train as we would "take" a piece of roast beef. Is it the train that takes us or we that take the train?

We are getting more and more into the habit of growing our teeth through our dentist.

If the elements get into one kind of company, they become one thing, if into another, another.

## *Life and Habit, vol. 2*

Wine and milk are only matter which has had a long talk with a vine and with a cow respectively. •

### ORGANIC AND INORGANIC

Because we do not make a noise when asleep, and are unconscious when asleep, we say that everything which does not make a noise is unconscious.

### UNITY

There is some contact between the worlds because we can see them. Sight is a long arm with many feelers at the end. We are half in a place where we can see it. So the lady who had bought her red silk stockings in Rome.<sup>1</sup> (That huge, long, million-handed arm, the eye.)

If you once get all the unity out, you will never get any in again.

Atoms. Are they connected? Then they are not separate things. Are they separate? Then how do they come together again? •

<sup>1</sup> Here is an allusion to a well-known story. Butler had it in one of its many forms thus: A gentleman travelling on the Continent got into conversation with two ladies, a mother and daughter, at some *table d'hôte*. They discussed their travels. Have you been here? Have you been there? and so on.

"And have you been to Rome?" inquired the gentleman.

"To Rome," repeated the old lady; "let me see, Rome? Mary, dear, have I been to Rome?"

"Why yes, mamma, don't you remember? that's where you bought your red silk stockings." — H.F.J.



## ON THE GENESIS OF FEELING



#### NOTE

THIS Lecture was delivered at the City of London College on 15th December 1887. It is now for the first time printed from Butler's ms., which is dated at the end 13th December 1887.

It contains passages which show that the subject was connected in Butler's mind with something he intended to write which would be called by one of these titles: (*a*) "Thought, Word, and Deed"; or (*b*) "Feeling, Opinion, and Action"; or (*c*) "Mind, Matter, and Motion." The idea constantly recurs in his Notes and in his published work, but this seems to be the only place in which he treated it continuously at any considerable length. The reader will observe that this Lecture is allied, especially at its close, to "On Knowing what gives us Pleasure," which follows it in the present volume.

H.F.J.

## On the Genesis of Feeling

### I

MY OBJECT IN VENTURING TO ADDRESS you this evening is to show reason for thinking that the power of feeling, which we commonly regard as something that comes of itself and without labour on the part of the living being that feels, is in reality as much the result of pains and long-continued effort after ever nicer and nicer discriminations as is that nervous mechanism with which all bodies must be endowed that have attained any considerable proficiency in feeling. In other words, I wish to show that feeling is an art like painting or reading and writing; that it is acquired like any other art mainly through practice; and that also, like every other art, it consists, when successful, in the judicious manipulation of certain arbitrary symbols and conventions.

And in the outset I need hardly say that I do not pretend to be able to explain the origin and first beginning of feeling, and that when I say genesis, or first begetting, I mean genesis by courtesy only; for we cannot point to any definite beginning of feeling more than to any definite beginning of matter. In the case of matter we can imagine an exceedingly thin, tenuous, gaseous something as gradually agglomerating into more solid groups, and settling down into worlds and systems of worlds containing first inorganic and finally organic beings, but we must start with something. The millionth part of a farthing put out at ten per cent. compound interest will, as I said in my book *Unconscious Memory* (1880), in 500 years become a million pounds; but we shall never see one penny of all this money if we have no millionth part of a farthing to start with. So with feeling. It is fair enough to try to get well defined and, to use an expression of Mr. Herbert Spencer's, "highly organized complexes of feelings" from such low, faint, indefinite, simple states as can be no more called feeling than the millionth part of a farthing can be called money; this is in accordance with our observation and experience, and is therefore proper to be believed; but

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to get an actual *bona fide* feeling, however simple, except by way of descent and development, from even simpler and simpler pre-existent sources of feeling is as impossible as to get perpetual motion, to square the circle, or to make something out of nothing.

My concern, then, is not with the ultimate origin either of matter or feeling, any more than the concern of the biologist is with the ultimate origin of life. He posits a low form, or low forms, of life in the outset, and deals firstly with the question of fact—whether the higher forms have been developed in course of ordinary descent from these lower and inchoate forms. When this matter has been settled, he proceeds to the question—how it all came about, what main principle or principles lie at the root of and 'explain' the process, that is to say, fit in comfortably with our other ideas, without causing intolerable mental inconvenience. It is thus that I propose to deal with the feelings of which we are now definitely conscious. I will enquire first whether they are, or are not, invariably begotten of pre-existent feelings of a more or less kindred character, so that the axiom, *omne vivum ex vivo*—that is to say, the axiom that there can be no living thing that has not proceeded from some other like living thing—is not more true than the axiom, *omne sentitum ex sentito*, meaning by this that every feeling, or complex of feelings, must have grown out of some other like feeling or complex of feelings. Having settled this, I will proceed to consider what principle mainly underlies the development of feeling, and how it is that such small beginnings as we see in the lowest forms of life can have grown to such complexity that we can feel pleasure on contemplating the wonders of the heavenly system, or pain at some grievous event that may have happened long since in some distant part of the world. But it is plain that in the short space at our command I can only treat so vast a subject in the most sketchy and superficial manner.

In the first place, then, is it true that there is no feeling which is not an outgrowth from some other kindred feeling?

## *On the Genesis of Feeling*

I prick my finger with a pin and feel pain. How can this feeling of pain be said to be an outgrowth from some other feeling? Surely it is a simple feeling of pain which, if it grows out of anything, grows out of the pin. This is the commonsense view of the matter, and here with common-sense people the matter may rest. It should be remembered, however, that philosophy is not common sense, and that what is all very well for common sense and the daily business of life is an impertinence when we have entered those regions of uncommon sense that are described by words ending in "osophy" or in "ology." We may be foolish to have entered on such ground at all, but having entered into a kingdom with laws and modes of thought so different from those that obtain in the vulgar world, we must either conform or expect to be ordered out again. Shakespeare makes Lepidus say that your serpent of Egypt is bred from your mud by the operation of your sun; and so even Plato, or some not less considerable person, held that mud bred frogs and mice, but this will not do for followers of Buffon and Lamarck. There are not more stars in heaven than there are worlds of thought within this our own planet, and each one of them, though conducted on the same general principles, requires a modification in the ideas and conceptions of him or her who for the time being enters it. To say that the feeling comes from the pin when we are dealing with psychology, is much the same as contending in a work on biology that frogs are bred from mud.

Equally absurd is it to say that the feeling comes from the nervous system, without which it is certainly true that feeling as we know it cannot exist. We can no more feel without a nervous system than we can see certain microscopic objects without a microscope. Destroy the nervous system and your feeling is gone; take away the microscope, and you can no longer see the amoeba; but the feeling is no more part of the nervous system than the amoeba is part of the microscope. The nervous system is a device which living beings have gradually evolved in order to help themselves to feel

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with greater nicety. Just as an electric telegraph is an extension of the nervous system beyond the limits of the body by way of helping us to feel more rapidly and at greater distances or as the alphabet is another device to enable us to convey our thoughts and to receive thoughts from other people. The thought is not in the alphabet nor in the words into which the letters of the alphabet are grouped. These are vehicles of thought, and in so far as they are this they have made thought more easy, more convenient, more tidy, and have infinitely extended it; but they are not thought. Thought, and appliances for facilitating and extending thought, grow up together as supply and demand invariably do; supply stimulates demand, and demand stimulates supply; but neither is the other. So thought stimulates language, and language, thought; feeling stimulates the nervous system, and the nervous system, feeling; but thought lies deeper than speech, and feeling, than the nervous system.

What, then, does the feeling come from? What is it? I have spoken of it as though it were an actual thing like an animal or plant that can be begotten and in its turn beget, that can be born, grow, and in due time die. This was a convenient way of stating the case, but it is obvious that there is no such thing as feeling apart from something that feels. There cannot be a movement without something that is moving, a hotness without something that is hot, or a quality of any kind without some body in which the quality resides. It is the same with feeling. When, therefore, we ask what a feeling is, and what it comes from, we ask what is it that takes place when a body feels, and to what antecedent state of that body must the new state be referred. If we decide on saying that there can be no feeling which is not begotten of some other and not wholly dissimilar feeling, we mean that there can be no present state of a body that can be rightly called a feeling state, without its having grown out of a kindred state of the same body, or of some other that is in close connection with it. Is this so? Is it true that we should not be in the feeling state that we are in when

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a pin pricks us, if we, or some other bodies with which we have been closely connected, had not already been in similar feeling states in consequence of pricks either from pins or other like things, such as thorns? I think that many of you will at once "feel" that this is so, and you will also feel that you would not feel this if kindred ideas had not in great measure already prepared the feeling and paved the way for it.

True, if you prick a baby's arm to vaccinate it the baby will feel pain and cry; but it would not feel thus unless it had been for some months past providing itself with a nervous mechanism wherewith to enable itself to feel; and it would not have been able to provide itself with this mechanism but for the feelings of its progenitors, and for the fact that these feelings led them to evolve the nervous system which their offspring has in due course repeated. The feeling of an infant on being pricked with a lancet is not a new spontaneous generation of feeling; it is an act of rapid reversion to and reproduction (with the inevitable modifications attendant on all reproduction) of a past and similar feeling state; or rather it is the reversion to an average and residuary impression concerning a very large number of such past feeling states; and if these had not gone before, the present feeling of the baby could no more have arisen than its body could have arisen without the pre-existence of the bodies of its ancestors. By a legitimate figure of speech, then, we may say that the present feeling has been begotten of past kindred feelings, and that it is to these that its genesis should be referred.

The parallelism already hinted at as existing between the development of feeling and that of bodily organization will appear more clearly, and at the same time we shall arrive at an easier apprehension of the principles that underlie the development, if we follow the course so wisely taken by the founders of the theory of descent in the last century, I mean Buffon, Erasmus Darwin, and Lamarck. These men wanted to show that all existing species, whether of plants or

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animals, are descended from a common source, and that they have assumed their present widely diversified forms in the course of a very long series of ordinary generations. I, following Mr. Herbert Spencer in this respect, wish to show that all our present widely diversified feelings have sprung from a single, simple, and highly unspecialized form of feeling, namely, a sense of shock, which Mr. Spencer has well posited as the unit of feeling, much in the same way as biologists posit the simple unspecialized cell of protoplasm as the unit of organism. The parallelism between the ends in view suggests a parallelism also in the methods of proof, and the course taken by the founders of biological evolution may be well followed by those who maintain that the evolution of feeling itself has travelled along the same main lines as those taken by the organization, by the help of which complex feeling is alone possible.

The great evolutionists of the last and early part of the present century found it impossible to catch and arrest a species in the very act of varying. By the conditions under which the modification was supposed possible it must take many times the life of any single observer to produce appreciable permanent modification in a wild species; fortunately, however, there were other species besides wild ones, and animals and plants under domestication afforded facilities for observing modifications, in the course even of a few generations, which were unattainable when wild species only were being considered. They therefore turned to domesticated species in order to establish their position. Here they found species in process of formation; and, if we can find feelings in process of formation, we shall do well to follow suit and to turn our attention principally to these—at any rate in the first instance. If we find that feeling and consequent opinion, wherever they come before the scenes so that we can watch their formation, are invariably produced and modified in accordance with a single principle, we may conclude that they are formed in much the same way behind the scenes, and that we should be able to see this if we could

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only get there so as to watch the process. To argue the unknown from the known is one of the oldest and safest canons of philosophical enquiry.

Where, then, can we at the present day find feeling in process of formation? The answer will already have occurred to most of you that we can do this wherever and whenever we are taken off our beat, and find ourselves on unfamiliar ground. In respect of matters that are new to us we do not know what to think, or, as we say with words that go a long way towards establishing the position I want to gain, we do not know what opinion to form, or, indeed, how to form any opinion at all. It may be said that opinion is not feeling, and that it does not follow because we do not know our opinion, nor how to form one, nor yet even what opinion of some one else's to catch and apply under the circumstances, that therefore we do not know our feeling; or that even if we do know it we have arrived at it by a process of more or less voluntary creation on the part of ourselves and our ancestors. But reflection will show that opinion and feeling row in the same boat, and that as we form opinion so also we form the feeling on which the opinion is based and from which it springs—feeling being only opinion writ small. Opinion is a highly sublimated and advanced form of feeling, towards which it stands in some such relation as multiplication to addition, or algebra to arithmetic. Feeling and opinion are as the rain drop and the river, the flake of snow and the glacier. They differ widely now, even as man and the amoeba are now different; but like man and the amoeba, the glacier and the flake of snow, the river and the rain drop, feeling and opinion have a common source, and the formation of the one is guided by the same general principles as that of the other. Indeed, the two pass into one another so subtly that no one can say where either begins or ends, any more than they can say where drop passes into slop, or slop into puddle, or puddle into pool, or pool into lake or ocean.

We may arrive, therefore, at a shrewd guess as to the



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genesis of feeling by examining the genesis of opinion, and to study the genesis of opinion we must turn to those cases in which it is not yet fully formed. We must watch it where the circumstances are new and therefore unfamiliar; for where they are familiar, the selection and application first of the appropriate feelings and then of the appropriate opinion—the reversion to, and reproduction of, a mental state already settled in past generations of thought—is so rapid that we cannot arrest the process and examine it without vitiating it, or rendering it abortive. To examine opinion is, as it were, to bring a mental telescope to bear on feelings that are too remote and lost in distance to be visible to the naked eye of the observer.

Not to waste time I may as well say at once that opinion is invariably formed by reference to, and reproduction as nearly as the case admits, of some past opinions that we have held already. When we have been already many times in the same circumstances so as to have already often formed a like opinion, the old opinion is promptly reproduced, the new birth proceeding from the parent form with little if any modification, and so rapidly that we are not conscious of going through any mental process. When the case is one about which the minds not only of ourselves but of our ancestors have been exercised for many generations, as about elementary questions of right and wrong, the opinion of a young and healthy mind is formed as instinctively as its limbs, or as any of its instinctive habits; a little initial assistance may be required before a right opinion becomes habitual but a very little goes a long way. Where, however, the circumstances have been less often reproduced, as about matters connected with art, science, or politics, we become conscious of much the same kind of effort in forming opinion as we experience when trying to perform an unfamiliar action; and, moreover, there is the closest analogy between the methods of procedure that we adopt in the two cases.

Indeed, I am not sure that the genesis of action will not serve to illustrate and explain the genesis of feeling, even better than the genesis of opinion will do so—at any rate

## On the Genesis of Feeling

opinion does not more surely grow out of feeling than action out of opinion. Passing over the difficult and intricate question of reflex actions and unrecognized feelings, not because they do not deserve to be considered, but because in such a mere sketch as I can alone lay before you this evening, there is no possibility of dealing with them, I will ask you to confine your attention to the genesis of those ordinary actions which we perform and acquire consciously. What does action spring from in these cases? What is it? On what is it based? How is it developed from small simple beginnings, performed with difficulty and uncertainty, to complex combinations of action which appear to be but one, though they comprise ever so many smaller subordinate ones when we examine them, decompose them, and resolve them into their simplest elements?

Of action in its essential underlying reality, we know nothing. Action is at once the most familiar and unfamiliar thing conceivable. Night and day, from the cradle to the grave, not to say on either side both of one and the other, we are acting without the interval of a second or fraction of a second during our whole lives; but when we come to ask what, in its ultimate essence, action really is, we can no more answer than we can say what that no less familiar thing, our own individuality, is. We know no more of one than of the other, and when we try to dig about the foundations of either we bring the whole fabric toppling down about our ears. But though we know nothing about its ultimate essence we know perfectly well what it is based on, what it grows out of, and what is the mode in which it proceeds from simple to more complex developments. Aristotle settled this, if it had not been settled already, in the first sentence of his *Politics*, the one on which he based his whole system: "Whatsoever men do," he said, "they do it because it seemeth to them good"; they do it because they think it the best and most advantageous thing to do under the circumstances.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Cf. the facsimiles of title-pages to *Erewhon* in vol. ii of the Shrewsbury Edition.—H.F.J.

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So does every living being take every action. I once asked a park-keeper in Kensington Gardens whether the birds in the Round Pond went backwards and forwards to the Serpentine, and he said, "Oh yes, they come and go, just whenever they think proper." I thought to myself, "But they cannot go unless they first think proper to do so." The opinion that for some reason or other it is to their advantage must precede the action that is taken upon the strength of it; and, what is more, if the action is to be well, unhesitatingly, and fearlessly taken, it must have been begotten in due course by many generations of like past action; and, similarly, the opinion on which it was based must have been begotten of many generations of like past opinions; and the feeling on which the opinion is based must have been begotten of many generations of like past feeling. When either the opinion of what is the best action to take is uncertain, or when, though the opinion is clear, it involves the striking out of a new line and lineage of action, the action will halt and will seldom prove satisfactory.

A year or two ago I watched a poor blind boy learning to play the concertina.<sup>1</sup> The opinion that it would be well for him to pick up a few halfpence by playing to people as they passed had been very definitely formed; he knew what he wanted to do, but he did not know how to do it. He sat on a low wall puffing, panting, perspiring, playing the instrument with his whole body rather than with his hands, and snorting like a child. So children learning to write seem to be writing with their whole body; they are ransacking and racking their whole bodies to find the appropriate action—to find a bit of action with which they are familiar, and which they can reproduce and work into the new action. In the course of time they light upon the only action that can serve them, and discard the action of the rest of their body as unsuitable. But their new action must grow out of old ones, with greater or less consciousness, and happier or less happy

<sup>1</sup> This poor blind boy comes again in the third part of "The Dead-lock in Darwinism" (*Collected Essays*, vol. ii).—H.F.J.

## *On the Genesis of Feeling*

search after the parent form of action, as the case may be. There can be no such thing as a spontaneous generation of action, except upon that minute scale that attends all change and all modification of any kind whatsoever; this can no more take place than there can be a spontaneous generation of your serpent of Egypt out of your mud.

To repeat briefly. Opinion is the matrix of action it is the ore from which action is smelted. All action, whether conscious or unconscious, is based on opinion consciously or unconsciously held. Action is the connecting link between the physical and psychical worlds; it is a kind of mean proportional between body and mind; it is the invisible immaterial opinion that belongs to the spiritual world, taking material shape, coming amongst us and revealing itself to us in the only way in which we can understand anything about it. The shape and physical form of anything that has shape at all whether man, or beast, or plant, or stone, or manufactured article, is the expression of the action which it has taken, and of the action that has been taken with it. A water jug is an embodiment or expression in material shape of the mind and action of the man or men who made it; but the action has been always formed from opinion wisely or unwisely taken concerning balance of advantage; and, as the material side of the object, whatever it may be, must have had its material progenitors, so also must the spiritual. We have to rack and ransack our bodies for fragments of old action when a new birth of action is required of us, so we have to rack and ransack our minds for shreds and fragments of old thought when a new birth of opinion must be formed; and if we cannot find a sufficient and suitable body of old opinion from which to form the new, the new one will be monstrous or altogether abortive. But as action is based upon opinion, so is opinion on feeling; and a spontaneous birth of feeling is as impossible as a spontaneous birth of opinion, of action, or of the bodily organization which is at once the cause and effect of long continued action on the part of many successive generations.

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### II

And here, bearing in mind the shortness of the space at our disposal, I must leave the first part of my enquiry and ask you to consider it as settled that all feelings are derived from pre-existent kindred feelings. I will now proceed to the second branch of the enquiry, namely: What is the main principle that underlies the development of feeling from very simple, unspecialized, indefinite beginnings, to the highly complex, definite, and specialized organizations, as it were, of feeling, of which human beings are conscious. In connection with this second enquiry my object is to show that the main agent in the development of feeling has been the same as that attendant upon the development of bodily organization, namely, use and effort. I wish to show that the higher and more definite feelings have been developed from the lower and more indefinite ones much as man has been developed from the amoeba, or the million pounds from the millionth part of a farthing already above referred to, namely, by usufruct in consequence of intelligent investment. Secondly I wish to show that the earliest feelings had no inherent essential connection with the objects and circumstances that gave rise to them, but were in the nature of arbitrary symbols adopted for no particular reason, or at any rate for none that we can now discover. I wish to show, for example, that the feeling of which we are aware on being pricked by a pin has no primordial inherent inevitable connection with our being pricked, either by a pin or by anything else, but that it is an arbitrary convention, invented and adopted for the purpose of enabling us more certainly and easily to recognize the combination of things and circumstances with which we have associated it, in exactly the same way as the word stone is a conventional arrangement of certain sounds (which it must not be forgotten are inseparably bound up with feelings), by means of which the idea of a stone is more rapidly and certainly conveyed, though the word has no essential inherent connection with, or resemblance to, a stone itself.

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Let us see for a moment what we do in the case of words.<sup>1</sup> We take certain sounds and by constantly associating them with or tacking them on to the idea of a stone we stick the two so tightly together that we cannot get them apart again. Where the one goes, the other goes also. Conceive the idea of a stone, and the word stone immediately presents itself; hear the word stone, and the idea of a stone will no less certainly come before the mind. But that there is no inherent necessary connection between the two appears at once from the fact that any other combination of letters will convey the idea just as well if we have only settled what the combination is to be. The letters p, i, e, r, r, e convey the idea "stone" to a Frenchman as readily and certainly as s, t, o, n, e do to ourselves. The virtue of a word as a vehicle of thought does not depend upon the letters chosen. Lapis, Lithos, Pietra, Pierre, Stein, Stane, and Stone all mean stone, and no one can say that one word means it better than another. It does not matter what word you choose provided you stick to it; it is the sticking to it that matters; and it is because different nations have tacked on different combinations to the same ideas, and insist on sticking each one to his own combination, that people belonging to different nations cannot, as a general rule, understand each other. The whole power of language is vested in the invariableness with which certain sounds are connected with certain ideas. Be strict in always connecting the same word with the same idea, and you will speak well; you will both keep your own meaning clear to yourself and will succeed in conveying it securely to other people. To use a combination of sounds one day in connection with one idea, and the next in connection with some other, is to abuse speech; and those who indulge in slovenly habits in this respect ere long lose the power alike of thinking and expressing themselves correctly. But the words in the first instance are arbitrarily chosen, and have no

<sup>1</sup> Some of what follows is also to be found in the lecture "Thought and Language," delivered at the Working Men's College, 1890; rewritten and delivered again at the Somerville Club, 1894 (*Collected Essays*, vol. ii). — H.F.J.

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more connection with the ideas they render than money has with the things we buy with it.

Let us go another step farther back. As the word has only an artificial connection with the idea for which it passes current, so the idea itself has nothing but an arbitrary artificial and conventional connection with the object which it serves to bring before the mind. This is not so easy to see as it is to see that a word is only an arbitrary symbol; for the idea of a stone does not vary in different countries as the word with which we express it varies. We do not find on crossing the Channel that a Frenchman's idea of a stone differs from our own; nevertheless, though he and we have much the same ideas about such a familiar object as a stone, we shall not be long in France before we discover that French ideas differ materially from English upon a great variety of questions. The Frenchman attaches one set of ideas to a combination of facts; the Englishman deals with the same facts and attaches different ideas to them; each sticks to his own ideas as he sticks to his own language; and hence upon a great many matters the two nations do not understand one another, even though they can speak a common language. Why is this? Why do Englishmen and Frenchmen attach the same ideas to many external objects but not to all, and why do they differ so much more widely in language than in ideas?

The reason is because ideas are far earlier things, and are, in fact, an infinitely older language, than the words which now do duty for them. The lower animals have no articulated language, but few will say that they have no ideas. A cat, for example, has very sufficient and definite ideas of a mouse, or of milk. When it sees the cat's meat man coming up the street it makes no secret of its ideas upon the subject, and though it cannot say "meat," it can understand the word neither better nor worse than a two-year-old child can do so. And though it cannot say "meat" with its mouth, it can say it with its tail, back, fur, eyes, and with expressions of endearment towards the cat's meat man. What is this but language in another shape? We have seen that the essence

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of language consists not in the choice of the symbol but in the sticking to it when it has been chosen; and it requires but little reflection to see that if this is so, the question whether the symbol shall be made with the tongue and vocal organs, or with the hand, as by a railway guard or the captain of a river steamer, or by ourselves when we write a letter, is a question of detail. The essential features of language are presented whenever any unvarying symbol is adopted for the purpose of conveying an idea. If the symbols are few, simple, but little specialized, and admit but little formulation and co-ordination, the language is of that elementary unspecialized character which exists among the lower animals; when they are many, highly specialized and co-ordinated, so as to admit of infinite complexity of arrangement and development, we have a language such as prevails among ourselves. For it is not easy to see how the possession of the germs of a rude elementary language can be denied to the lower animals; and as for the ideas that underlie language, every creature that lives, moves, and has a business of any sort to attend to, must be allowed to have ideas about all that concerns the successful carrying on of that business, no less definite than those we have about the management of our own affairs. We ourselves have only few and ill-defined ideas, if indeed we have any at all, about things that do not concern us and form no part of our daily life and interests; nor is there any reason to suppose that other animals differ from us in this respect; but within the limits of its own business everything that lives has ideas—plants as much as animals—and all of them know their own business though they do not know ours more than we know that of our neighbours. I have not been able to detect the germs of anything corresponding to language in the vegetable world; I know no case of any plant attaching an arbitrary symbol to an idea and using the symbol to convey the idea to another plant, nor do I believe that any such mental development as this has been attained even among animals of the simplest kind; but ideas are co-extensive with



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life, and in animal life the essential characteristics of language—that is to say of a means of communicating ideas—make their appearance very low down in the scale. Ants and bees, for example, communicate ideas to one another by the use of symbols arbitrarily arrived at and having no inherent connection with, or resemblance to, the idea they serve to convey, the efficacy of the symbol consisting solely in the invariableness with which the idea and the symbol are so connected that the part stands for the whole, and wherever either is presented the other, by force of association, is presented along with it.

Ideas, then, are much older than even the oldest and least specialized means of formulating and conveying them; and it is because they are so much older that they are so much more settled and differ so infinitely less in different nations. A day will doubtless come when one language will have superseded all others, much as one set of ideas about a stone has become generally adopted and has superseded all others, and we may suppose that the record of the fact that many languages existed will after, say, fifty thousand years, become lost as much as the record of the origin of any one of the many languages that now exist. Language will then be as uniform among all the inhabitants of the globe as ideas, and (I may as well at once say) feelings, are at present, or even more so; and it will be as difficult to conceive that language was slowly and laboriously evolved from germs that cannot properly be called language at all, as it is for us now to perceive that feeling is the result of effort and convention. It is only because language is so much newer than either ideas or feelings that we are able with comparative ease to disinter its past and forecast its future; and if it were as old, it would be as mysterious as feeling is.

But in the meantime the existing diversities of language, coupled with the fact that for all practical purposes one is as good as another, serve to show how purely arbitrary is the connection between words and the ideas that underlie them. This has admitted of demonstration. But surely the ideas

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we connect with exterior objects are just as arbitrary as words, and have just as little inherent essential connection with, and resemblance to, the realities that underlie them. As words are conventions and symbols for the expression of ideas, so are ideas for the expression of the things about which we form them. Nothing, for example, can be more unlike a stone than the ideas of a stone that exist in our minds. That there is a material object outside ourselves which gives rise to the idea, and that the idea in sane people's minds corresponds invariably with the particular object to which it is attached and to nothing else, these are patent and obvious facts, and on them coherence of ideas and health of thought depend. If the idea is to be a serviceable and working one, then the connection between the thought and the thing must be no less constant than the connection between the word and the idea; but there is just as little inherent resemblance between the two things that are connected in the one case as in the other; the word "stone" is not more unlike the idea "stone" than the idea "stone" is unlike the stone itself. True, we know nothing whatever about the thing itself as apart from our own ideas of it, and perhaps we ought not to say that it is like or unlike anything at all; but in spite of the paucity of our ideas we know that we can pick up a stone and fling it at a man's head, whereas ideas of stones can neither be used nor abused in this way, and thoughts and things generally are too unlike to be compared. An idea of one stone may be compared with an idea of another, and when we think we are comparing two stones, we are in reality only comparing two ideas that correspond with two stones; but the idea of the stone is not like the stone, it occupies no room in space, has no specific gravity, and when we come to know more about stones we find our common everyday ideas about them to be but rude, epitomized, and highly conventional renderings of the actual facts—mere hieroglyphics or counters and bank notes, that serve to express and convey commodities with which they have not even a semblance of analogy.

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Indeed, we daily find as the range of our perceptions becomes enlarged, either by invention of new appliances or through our becoming aware of new relations between, and applications of, old ones, that we change our ideas though we have no reason to think that the thing about which we are thinking has changed. In the case of a stone, for instance, the rude, unassisted, uneducated senses see it as above all things motionless; whereas assisted and trained ideas concerning it represent motion as its most essential characteristic. No matter how still a stone may appear to be, we know that each one of the molecules or small particles of which it is composed is in a state of incessant vibration, and thus of motion; and according to the most recent opinion, it is the rate and character of the vibrations going on within any molecule that are the most essential constituent of the molecule itself. If it is vibrating at a certain rate and in certain ways, it is held to be a molecule of one kind of matter; if at other rates, and in other ways, of another kind; so that our ideas of bodies that seem to the uneducated sense to be in a state of the most profound repose are modified on fuller information and transformed into a stock-taking, as it were, of motions that are the very negation of repose. But the thing about which we happen to be thinking has not changed. It is we who have seen fit to adopt a new set of ideas in lieu of old ones which we have discarded as inconvenient. And this shows plainly enough, that the ideas we attach to objects have reference to our own convenience rather than the thing itself, and that we can take this or that idea and apply it to this or that object, in whatever manner we find to fit in most comfortably with the arrangements we have already made in respect of our other ideas. If, then, we can modify them at will in their later stages, where they come under our ken and can be detected in the act of varying, there is the strongest presumption that will, effort, and deliberation have been essential factors in the formation of the idea from its earliest inception to its most matured form.

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What applies to ideas must, as I have already insisted, inevitably apply to the feelings upon which ideas are based, and we should hold that even our most well defined and hereditarily instinctive feelings were in the outset formed, not so much in involuntary, self adjusting, mimetic correspondence with the objects that give rise to them, as by long and arduous development of an originally conventional arrangement of sensation and perception—symbols—caught hold of in the first instance as the only things we could grasp, and applied with as little rhyme or reason as children learning to speak often apply the strange and uncouth sounds which are all they can then utter. When I say “we,” I mean, of course, our remote invertebrate ancestors from whom we are lineally descended, and of whose personality we are a continuation. These invertebrate ancestors, with as yet none but the very inchoation of a nervous system, attached some of the few and vague sensations, which were all they could then command, to such motions of outside things as echoed within themselves, and used them to feel; hence, presently, by a repetition of the same process, they invented a second conventional arrangement of idea—symbols—to think the things with which they connected them, so as to docket them and recognize them with greater force, certainty, and clearness; much as we use words to help us to docket and grasp our ideas and feelings, or written characters to help us to docket and grasp our words.

Having once established the connection they stuck to it, not probably without much wrangling as to which was the most proper to be established, nor yet without the growing up of many widely different languages, as it were, of feeling, some of which doubtless still prevail among the lowest and lower existing forms of life. Nevertheless a consensus of opinion was eventually arrived at to the effect that it was not pleasant to be cut in half and eaten, and that on the whole, to eat and assimilate is a more agreeable and less disturbing sensation than that of being eaten and assimilated. This elementary point was in the course of time so definitely

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established that the instinct of self-preservation became capable of hereditary transmission, and passed into a commonplace of feeling, so universally accepted that none but the idiots, who from time to time appear among all living forms, have attempted to use their right of private judgement so far as to reopen the question. On this, the development of a rude grammar of feeling, and of the nervous mechanism whereby its rules could be alone formulated and carried into practice, was a mere question of time and of further long continued effort after ever nicer and nicer discrimination.

I make, then, the free use of whatever feeling power a living being has had, and a long continued, though in the outset exceedingly vague, endeavour after further feeling power, the key to the position. In fact I make use and disuse the main factor of mental as much as of physical evolution. It will be thus seen that I again come into collision with the doctrine most generally accepted in connection with evolution, and prefer the Darwinism of Erasmus Darwin, put forward at the end of the last century and the beginning of the present, to the theory of his more famous grandson, the late Mr. Charles Darwin. This, however, is a matter which I have elsewhere dealt with at considerable length, and our time will not permit of our entering upon a subject of so great difficulty. It will be enough to remind you that by the system of Erasmus Darwin and Lamarck, use and disuse, in consequence of efforts varying with varying needs, constituted the main factor in the development of higher from lower types of life, while in the system of the late Mr. Charles Darwin this is strenuously denied, and the development of higher from lower forms is referred to the accumulation of variations that originated for the most part accidentally, or, as it was also said, spontaneously.

And now to bring this lecture to a conclusion. If the view which I have been attempting to expound be taken, we stand towards our feelings in an attitude much the same as that in which a dog may be supposed to stand towards our own

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reading and writing. The dog may marvel at the wonderful instinct whereby we can tell the price of butcher's meat by looking at a piece of paper, much as we marvel at his own, to us, inconceivably subtle power of discriminating between the feeling he experiences on smelling his master's boots on a pavement, and those occasioned within him by the scent of a score of other people's boots that have passed over the same pavement since his master. We think this marvelous power on the part of the dog came of itself, by luck, and not by any long continued effort after ever nicer and nicer discrimination on the part of the dog and of his ancestors. So he, if he had wits enough to be so great a fool, would probably think, as Dogberry did, that to write and read comes by nature. Perhaps it does; but the effort and pains necessary for the acquisition of the power must have come by nature also. Its coming through effort does not bar its coming by nature, nor does its coming by nature bar its having also come through effort. Reflection will show that the dog's niceness of discrimination in the matter of smell is not more likely to have come without laborious practice than our own niceness of discrimination between the shapes of different written characters or the sounds of words that differ only by the shadow of a shade. In either case the proficiency in the application of the appropriate feeling is, in all probability, the result of the same kind of slow, laborious development as that which has attended our more recent arts, mechanical appliances, and, indeed, our bodily organs themselves. The body is the mechanical invention of mechanical inventions; it is the art of arts; and its development has always advanced hand in hand, and step by step, with development of mind and feeling. These two things act and react on one another, growth of mind being throughout coincident with growth of organic resources whether within the body or without it; and growth of organic resources, whether within the body or without it, being coincident with growth of mind.

• Feeling is the art which differentiates the civilized organic

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world from that of brute inorganic matter, but still it is an art. It is the outcome of a mind the lowest germs of which must be supposed common both to the organic and the inorganic, but which only the organic has been at any pains to cultivate. It is not an integral essential part of mind itself, whatever mind may be; not, at least, when it has attained sufficient development to be properly called feeling at all. It is no more this, than language and writing are parts of thought. These, as I have said already, are arts and appliances in aid of thought, as the body is an art and appliance in aid of the individual; but the body is not the individual; and neither feeling nor the language in which we express feeling is thought. The organic world can alone feel, and those members of the organic world that have developed a high degree of nervous organization can alone feel definitely and effectively upon any great variety of subjects. In like manner the one member of the organic world who has alone developed a highly organized and systematized means of articulating sentences can alone speak effectively. But as speech is only the development of powers, the germs of which are possessed also by the lower animals, so feeling is only a sign of the employment and development of powers the germs of which exist also in inorganic substances. It has all the characteristics of an art; and, though it should probably rank as the oldest of those arts that are peculiar to the organic world, it is one that is still in process of development, and is very far from having attained its ultimate limits.

And now for one word of practical application. We all know that we can in great measure command and control our feelings, and learn to feel more rightly than we originally did about any subject to which we have given our minds. These are common everyday expressions and our common everyday expressions cry aloud in our streets with more truth and common sense, if we will only heed them, than can be found in whole books full of philosophy. We find our feelings most capable of modification in respect of matters that

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are new or comparatively new to us, but the fact that we have any voice at all in the modification is enough to show that feeling, where we can watch its inception, is a matter of pains and sheer hard work. Analogy points in the direction of thinking that this must always have been so, and that is it is with our most recent and least well defined feelings so also was it with our oldest, best defined, and most instinctive, before they became settled and, as it were, stereotyped through the long use which has made it hard if not impossible to depart from them. What, then, is the secret of learning how to feel rightly? And how can we each one of us contribute his or her small share towards the growth of a juster feeling upon those subjects on which feeling and opinion are not yet definitely formulated? If the Frasmus Darwinian and Lamarckian system of evolution be adopted the answer to this question is easy. The evolution of higher, more definite, and more useful feelings from lower, vaguer, and less serviceable forms, must have followed the same general law as that supposed to underlie all other evolution, and the first impulse must be supposed to spring from sense of need. To wish to feel more accurately is the first stage. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it: Try to do so. Very few people wish to feel rightly upon more questions than they can help. They wish to appear to do so, and are glad enough to get what they take to be a straight tip that shall help them to pass themselves off among those who are trying in good faith to find out what the right feeling is and to apply it; but very few genuinely care about knowing what gives them pleasure. The art of knowing what gives us pleasure is difficult and laborious, and few there be that find it. We most of us think it less trouble to buy a newspaper to do our thinking and feeling for us, than to be at the pains of finding out the proper feeling for ourselves. Perhaps we are right. Life is short, and the art of feeling long. Still, to those who want a copy-book maxim that will really serve them in better stead than any other that I know of, I would say:



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“Never say that you feel a thing unless you feel it distinctly; and, if you do not feel distinctly, say at once that you do not as yet quite know your own mind.”

This is not by any means so easy a thing as it would appear to be; in fact it is an exceedingly rare thing to find any one who has the courage of his want of opinions so firmly fixed as that it shall never fail him; but I have always found this the first step towards acquiring a juster feeling upon any matter about which I thought it worth while to try to come to an understanding with myself, and have little doubt that if others will persistently take it they will find it so clear the ground that ere long they will see their way to an onward firmer second step in the right direction.

## ON KNOWING WHAT <sup>1</sup>GIVES US PLEASURE

THIS essay is placed immediately after the lecture "On the Genesis of Feeling" because the conclusion of the lecture seems to lead to it naturally. And as the lecture was delivered in 1887, we may perhaps take it that this article was written about 1888. It is on a subject which occupied Butler's thoughts very often: there is, for instance, the article headed "Instead of an Article on the Dudley Exhibition," originally written for and published in *The Drawing-Room Gazette* of 11th November 1871. This is reproduced in vol. 1 of the Shrewsbury Edition (pp. 246-250); and on p. xx of that volume I say that the essay is on the difficulty of acquiring the power of judging any work of art; and that it might be the essay on "The Art of Knowing what gives one Pleasure" of which he says in chapter 2 of *Alps and Sanctuaries* that he had to abandon it because it modulated him out of the diatonic, and into various remote keys "amid a maze of metaphysical accidentals and double and treble flats." I do not think on reconsideration that *The Drawing-Room Gazette* essay strays far from the key in which it starts, nor does the present essay; and when he wrote this one the former was certainly in his mind, if it was not actually present to his eyes either in ms., or in print which he afterwards destroyed. They both contain the suggestion that it would be an effective pose always to assume an air of complete ignorance in front of a picture. "What more cruel comparison could one have at an exhibition?" And there is a sentence in the former article reproduced in the present one, with a variation in its concluding sentence to which attention is directed in a footnote. An industrious reader with a taste for making comparisons may find more resemblances. The correct view perhaps is that these two essays were both restatements of the attempt referred to in *Alps and Sanctuaries*.

The subject turns up again in "Life and Habit, vol. 2," and in the published *Note-Books* are notes dealing with it. The long note with the heading "On Knowing what gives us Pleasure" is an amalgamation of no less than nine manuscript notes.

H.F.J.

## On Knowing what gives us Pleasure

### I

JOB, IT HAS BEEN MAINTAINED, SOLVED AN *ignotum per ignotius* when he cried: "But where shall wisdom be found?" and answered, off-hand: "Behold the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom: and to depart from evil is understanding"; for this, when we are in a difficulty, is the very point we want to know. It is a comparatively easy matter to avoid evil and to do what the fear of the Lord involves, if what these things may be is made clear: difficulties for the most part are only difficulties because we are so often in the dark as to what is, after all, the most righteous course to take. So that Job's answer may be held with some reason to tell no more than the question it professes to set at rest.

It has, therefore, been proposed lately to adopt pleasure as upon the whole a safer guide to right conduct than duty—a reasonable pleasure, and one which does not entail reaction being, of course, intended. In defence of this position it is urged that pleasure is for the most part more easy to distinguish, and moreover that duty, even as divinely sanctioned, does in the end rest upon pleasure, because the end of all duty is the greatest and most permanent happiness for ourselves and others.

As regards the latter part of this contention, it may be admitted that the aim of morality is a maximum of the most comfortable life and a minimum of pain and death for the greatest number of people. Whatever tends in this direction is moral, and whatever tends against it is immoral. So that if we substitute "happiness" for "pleasure" (as expressing the most lasting and best assured forms of pleasure) no immorality can come from making duty rest ultimately upon pleasure. It may be questioned, however, whether pleasure and duty, the *utile* and the *honestum*, should not rather be regarded as functions one of another—that is to say as two variables neither of which can vary without entailing a corresponding variation in the other.

But as regards the earlier proposition which maintains

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that pleasure is more easily distinguished than right or duty, it is one which may perhaps command assent on a first hearing, but which will certainly be demurred to upon consideration. The power of discerning what we like or dislike is inborn with us in respect of only a few matters, and very imperfectly even here. Our matured discernment of our pleasures, even when such comparatively simple ones as those of taste and smell are involved, is as much a matter of growth as our bodily development; while in the case of things about which our race has been conversant during the last few hundreds of generations only, it will be a matter not only of growth, which is for the most part unconscious, but also of conscious and laborious self-culture. It is indeed common to hear people talk about the unerring judgement of childhood, but hardly any stress is to be laid on this; it is more true to fact to maintain that the finding out what we do or do not like in any of the main branches from which pleasure is commonly derived, is one of the most serious and difficult duties which a man has to discharge towards himself during his whole life, and the one moreover which of all others he will be most ready to shift on to other people's shoulders; and it may be added that the better a man succeeds in the discharge of this his first and most obvious duty, the better he has been educated, and the more likely is he to discharge all other duties in a satisfactory manner.<sup>1</sup>

The foregoing is very obvious; but who does not find himself from time to time tripping in respect to it, and parading a supposed knowledge of likes and dislikes which must be either imaginary or at the best unintelligent?

It was our lot once to form the acquaintance of a gentle-

<sup>1</sup> This last sentence, beginning "It is indeed common," is taken from the essay "Instead of an Article on the Dudley Exhibition" (reproduced in vol. i of the Shrewsbury Edition, p. 247) where the concluding words run thus, not identical with the present essay: ". . . and it may be added parenthetically that the more carefully and thoroughly a man discharges this first of duties towards himself, the better he is likely to discharge every other duty."—H.F.J.

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man, in America, who had been a tailor and had retired very rich. He was a little, yellow old man in a brown wig and with an ecstatic gleam in his eye. He implied that in a city, the rest of whose inhabitants were almost entirely given over to dollar-worship, he alone had heard an inward voice warning him to flee from the wrath to come. He had accordingly learnt to play the violin, and had made a collection of pictures. From the outset he had resolved that no one should buy a picture on his behalf; he did not know whether he ought to like this or that, neither did he care; but he knew what he liked, and better, too, than another could tell him; this was enough for him; he was not buying to show off his taste, not he; he did not pretend to taste; he bought for his pleasure the pictures gave him, and was indifferent whether others might laugh at him or no. Such was the account he gave of himself. It came near to:

“An honest mind and plain, he must speak truth!  
An they will take it, so; if not, he's plain.”<sup>1</sup>

But it is impossible to say how much was true and how much affectation; it is probable, however, that so far as having bought without advice is concerned the old gentleman had spoken truly, for there was a unity about the collection both as regards subjects and mode of treatment which suggested its having been due to a single want of intelligence.

If the reader would know what it was like, let him imagine to himself a gallery consisting entirely of pictures that had been rejected for the Suffolk Street exhibition. Let this gallery be sent down to Birmingham, and the best half of the pictures selected and hung in an exhibition there. Let the worser half go on, we will say, to Shrewsbury, and be subjected to a second weeding, the best half being retained for exhibition while the residue went on, perhaps to Wrexham. At Wrexham we shall have touched bottom, and found our American friend's collection—which had cost him over five

<sup>1</sup> [*King Lear*, ii, 2, 105.]

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and twenty thousand pounds in hard cash. We may add parenthetically that these pictures were the glory of the neighbourhood. It was whispered that they would be left to the town museum when their owner died, but if not left by, will they ought certainly to be purchased and made public property; they would refine the taste of all that part of the country, and if once dispersed could never be got together again. No one wanted to say a word against them, but if he were to do so he had better hold his tongue; as for a stranger, he might go and see them or not as he liked, their possessor was always glad to show them, but no stranger must see them and say they were not good. Having made up our minds to praise the collection handsomely we were for some time at a loss exactly what to say; but in the end we arrived at the following, which may perhaps serve the reader if he ever happens to find himself in a like case. We said that the collection would vie with any similar one in the old country, or indeed in any part of the world. We said this fervently, and the result was quite satisfactory.

But to return. The moral of the foregoing narrative is plain, and consists in bearing in mind that likes and dislikes, however genuine they may be, are to be distrusted except when they are for things about which we have had experience. But this cuts at the very root of the theory that pleasure is generally a safe guide, and confines its being so within limits so narrow that no one is likely to dispute them. Every one knows the frequent difficulty of forming a judgment about matters that come upon him even in his own profession. No professional painter for example would buy with the off-handedness with which a rich amateur will often do so. He will say he should like to see such and such a picture, by a man whose work is new to him, once or twice more before making up his mind whether or no it pleases him; he will ask to see other works by the same hand; and, if possible, will make acquaintance with the painter himself—or at any rate get to know what sort of a man he is or was; after this, he will say, he will be better able to know whether

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the work is to his taste or not. The musician, or the wine-merchant, will behave in a similar way. It is only in extreme cases (and the extremeness of a case consists only in the number of times the point it involves has been decided—the extreme case having been a knotty point once) it is only in extreme cases, or when works in a very familiar style are in question, that a decision can be at once arrived at.

Some think that we should not want to know anything about the painter before deciding whether the picture pleases or no. The spectator should not allow himself to travel outside the four corners of the work before him. It were better he should not even know the painter's name. What should we think of a musician who would not say whether the tone of such and such a violin was pleasing to him until he knew the date of the instrument and the name of its maker, and who would further wish to be informed whether he was married or single, how many children he had, and other such irrelevancies? The answer is that a consummate judge, a man who has been conversant about pictures or violins all his life, and who excels alike in theory, practice, and acquaintance with the history and present condition of his art—such a man will be very well able to form an opinion not only upon a whole picture or a distinctly heard tone, but upon half a picture or a tone heard through a closed door; he will find all essential particulars concerning the man revealed to him almost instantaneously through the merest fragment of a work.

It is common again to hear an author complain that a reviewer has not read his book. This is very likely to be true; but a reviewer who has written books himself, and who has kept himself up to date generally will be able to take up on Mudie's counter a book by a man of whom he knows nothing and, if he turn over a page or two as he walks, he will know fairly well what kind of a writer he has got hold of before he reaches the front part of the library. Such proficiency as this, however, is strictly limited to a man's own profession, or perhaps to his own branch of it; and, whether



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pictures, violins, or books are concerned, the greater number of well-disposed critics will be glad to aid their judgement with information of all sorts that may have any bearing upon the circumstances under which the object of their criticism was produced.

In opposition to those who contend that the work and the man have so little to do with one another that no cognizance should be taken of the one while the other is being considered, we opine that a good man may, and often does, do bad work, through bad training, the influence of a bad epoch, or through having been led by circumstances to adopt a profession for which he was not fitted; but that a bad man will do no good work under any circumstances. If the man is currently believed to be rotten, the work will probably prove rotten also; but if this is not so, and the work holds its own in spite of our preconception, then the man must be taken as good also, however much the facts may apparently be against him. For a man's work is himself, and the greatest value of the best work lies in its bringing us into communion with the mind we feel to lie behind it, and in the end the man will show through, above, and behind his manner.

The most competent judges, then, do in time get to know well enough and quickly enough what it is that gives them pleasure; but, *ipso facto* that they can do this, they are great men; they are so few, and so long in getting others to agree with them that for the most part we are forgotten before our case comes on.<sup>1</sup> Granted, again, that there are extremes of good and bad about which judgement is easy; there are many such. We can hardly fancy a critic being puzzled for long as to whether Rembrandt, for example, was a great painter; but in the case of De Hooghe it has been different. It has taken a fairly competent body of men nearly two hundred years to find out how much he is to their taste. Strange! how some men have a great position at once assigned to

<sup>1</sup> Butler wrote originally: "for the most part they are forgotten before their case comes on" and altered "they" into "we" and "their" into "our" in the MS.—H.F.J.

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them, and yet retain it. We think of Handel, Giotto, Giovanni Bellini, Giorgione, Titian, Newton, and a score of others in art, literature, and science, much as their contemporaries thought concerning them; we have added nothing and subtracted nothing from the fame which they attained while living. With others not less great, as Shakespeare, Milton—how slow the world was in finding them out! Why should we be able to feel at once that Handel was a giant, and not be able to feel it about Shakespeare? One would have thought that the Falstaff plays and *Hamlet* would be, to say the least, as intelligible to as large a number of people as *Messiah*, *Samson*, and *Israel in Egypt*. We cannot divine the explanation of this mystery; but the fact of its existence shows how difficult it is for people to find out that they like things which they might have been expected to fall head over ears in love with at first sight.

And if the foregoing is true as regards our likes, how much truer is it not with our dislikes! How long do not some men keep favour with posterity, whose works in the end are found out to have no lasting pleasure in them! Look at Guido, Guercino, and Domenichino, men who to within fifty years ago were thought incomparable, but who are now gone for ever! Look even at Raffaele himself against whom the rebellion is in a murmur only as yet, but in a murmur of that sort, and among such people that the ultimate verdict may be foretold. The world means well, but it is as ready as a child to take people at their own estimate of themselves, and as long in finding out that they were never good to it. It is as children who sometimes believe themselves to like a nurse who is impatient with them, if they have heard their elders say among themselves that she is a superior person. And it is generally the nicest and best children who will be the slowest in finding out how completely they have been humbugged.

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### II

The conclusion we have arrived at is a somewhat disheartening one, and might be misrepresented as though it made us out to be living in the world rudderless and liable to be misled continually, whether we take pleasure or duty for our guide. This is certainly the case when we venture too far off our own ground. If people will insist on meddling with what they do not understand they must expect to go wrong unless acting under competent advice. Sensible people, however, will keep their aspirations within reasonable limits, and secure one base of operations before advancing to another; so long as they stick to this they will feel no want of rudder or light, or whatever peevish people may have a fancy for calling it. It is always those who most neglect the powers and opportunities they have who are loudest in clamouring for more. The difficulty lies in the fact that our civilization has become so complex that unless we are to lead a life of almost mechanical routine we must from time to time find ourselves on the verge of what we do not understand, or even right in the middle of it before we have found out our ignorance. The temptations to this, are so many and so natural; it is, in fact, so desirable that we should be as many-pleasured as we reasonably can, that we may be excused for considering the means whereby we may be best able to indulge without doing ourselves and others more harm than good.

The key to the whole matter is already given by the consideration that we have no difficulty about knowing our likes and dislikes as long as we keep to matters in which we have had practical experience; and the same holds good with duty. Admitting, then, that this is the only perfectly safe guide to a knowledge of our likes and dislikes in any matter from which we are seeking pleasure, we find ourselves driven into the old tiresomely impracticable *cul de sac*, to wit: that the picture collector should learn to paint, and the china maniac to make cups and saucers before he is to be allowed

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to run his hobby in his own way. As there is no stopping logical people when an inch has been once given them, we shall soon find it follow that no one but a Rembrandt or a Titian should ever be allowed to form a collection at all. This is perfectly true in theory, but if it were generally recognized, Rembrandt would have to buy Titian's pictures and Titian, Rembrandt's, for there would be no one else to buy them; and as Titians and Rembrandts would not like this they would wisely refrain from insisting too rigorously on theory. Practically, more people have money to pay for what they fancy will give them pleasure, than believe themselves to have time to learn how to enjoy what they have purchased. They get their pleasure by way of the illusion that they are going to be pleased, and this, if they are rich, they can repeat so often that the illusion washes and wears almost as well as the reality, or perhaps better. For it is so easy to flatter oneself with the supposed possession of knowledge which is not known, and the consequences of mistake in the case of rich amateurs are so seldom brought home to the sinner himself, or if brought home sit upon him so lightly, that the illusion extends to belief that he actually has the reality; and on this it ceases to be worth his while to study the source of enjoyment practically.

Under such circumstances, however, there is only one alternative if a man would avoid making himself ridiculous in the eyes of genuine practical knowers—he must put himself under competent advice. If a man is a judge of men, and has money to pay those whom he chooses to advise him, he can, and had perhaps better, dispense with other practical knowledge than that which will accrue to him incessantly, but with hardly an effort on his own part, during his converse with men and things. Nevertheless, not a few demur to being put under professional advice. A man, they will say, may be wrong, but even so he had better stand by his likes and dislikes for better or worse; we should do ourselves no violence in this matter but keep our taste unsophisticated as completely as we can; we should not try to make ourselves

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like things at all; it is only those things that make us like them which are worth going after—and more to the same effect.

The intention of this is excellent. But, on the one hand, the likes and dislikes of most people about most things are so faint and indeterminate as to be unknown even to those who have them; and, on the other, to say that our likes and dislikes when recognizable are to be respected, however untutored they may be, is to deny the possibility of mental growth and culture generally, and to require from all who follow any art or profession that they should always go over the whole ground *de novo* for themselves without their labour being in any way lightened by that of their predecessors. But all who have studied any art or profession must have remarked how their likes and dislikes have changed, and must find themselves wondering how they can have ever tolerated what they once raved about. Many a young man, for example, is enthusiastic in his admiration for Mendelssohn or Correggio, whose maturer judgement leads him to dislike both these men. The maturer judgement, however, can never be attained, or only after long vagaries, unless a man consults not only his own likes and dislikes but those of others also, the best whom he can find, and sets himself to discover what their feelings in the matter are, and upon what grounds they rest. If it is urged that one who forms his judgement, that is to say his likes and dislikes, upon those of other people, has handed himself over as it were to father confessors and will soon lose the power of coming to an independent opinion—we reply that this may be true if he takes whatever he hears without further consideration, and without weighing it as well as he can. But sensible people will not act thus; they ask the opinion of others not that they may at once adopt it (unless in the very outset of the undertaking) but that they may see whether they find considerations presented to them which have escaped them hitherto. We admit, however, that there is a presumption in favour even of an untutored liking if it is

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very strong and holds its own in spite of all that can be urged against it; when this is so it has something of the *Vox Dei* about it, and is to be gratified if there is money with which to do so.

So much for the not giving too loose a rein to our likings as they actually stand. As for choice of subject the rules are few and easy. In the first place we shall do well not to rear any taste which does not manifest itself in the first instance as an infant of some vigour. It is well to neglect branches of pleasure as much as of study unless the need of them is distinctly felt or anticipated. Let them have to meet a little opposition rather than encouragement, and perish of neglect if they have not strength to overcome it. Another rule is no less simple, and consists in not having too many irons in the fire but in getting as much pleasure as may be out of one thing at a time, and in advancing to the next through doors which the first has opened.

But perhaps the most important step towards forming reasonable likes and dislikes is one so self-evident that I hardly venture to write it, yet it involves half the battle; it consists in a perfectly shameless recognition of the fact, when it is a fact, that one does not know whether one likes or not. No man, however great, can at all times know his own mind even when on his own ground. If Handel could hear Beethoven's C Minor Symphony and Wagner's Overture to *Tannhäuser*, it is likely enough he might not at once know what to say to them; or at any rate that as a young man he would have asked for time before giving his opinion. And if there is no shame attaching to the uncertainty, so, surely, there is no difficulty in discovering that it exists; for we have only to find that the answer to the question whether or no we like does not come readily, and we should settle the matter at once that we do not know. Those who protest as our American friend protested that they know their likes and dislikes about things strange to them, can at the best be only "trying to make believe" that they know. It is out of all reason and absolutely impossible that they should have

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more than a delusive glimmering on the matter. No attention whatever should be paid to them; they are a feeble, unimaginative folk who cannot rise to the conception that other people in the world besides themselves tell lies. And yet, though so unimaginative where a little of the poet's sympathetic insight would avail them, they swallow readily the absurdity of believing that their neighbours can really make up their minds at once about what is new to them—or, in other words, will believe that people can acquire ideas and knowledge independently of experience. This comes practically to believing in spontaneous generation. It may be observed in passing that the likes and dislikes of such protesters are always on the safe side. By a curious coincidence it will be found that they happen—of course quite independently—to like what the current orthodoxy of the moment will approve of. What a gospel should it not be to them, if only they would accept it, that there is nothing to be ashamed of in not knowing one's mind except when one is in the dead middle of one's profession, but rather that the shame lies in being so ignorant as not to know that it takes much time and trouble to be able to like or dislike intelligently, and in pretending anything at all unless under some pressure. If a man cannot get as far as this there is nothing to be done with him. But the majority of men will not so far fail; and, if they can get thus far, the question how much further they will go depends almost invariably on how far they *bona fide* desire to do so.

So cheap and so effective is this course of declaring oneself in doubt as to one's opinion unless the inward voice pronounces promptly and decidedly one way or the other, that it is surprising it has been so much neglected even as a piece of affectation. Those who wish to flaunt superiority in the faces of their friends have overlooked perhaps the most telling of all modes of doing so. What more cruel companion could we have at an exhibition than one who, as soon as we had committed ourselves to liking or disliking a picture, should at once play inability to come to an opinion without

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further consideration, especially if the deferring of judgement is as reasonable as it often is? It is probable that aesthetic people are debarred from this course by their natural hatred of everything that comes near the truth, and by feeling that if they once gave way to this, or even were to find themselves seriously tempted to admit uncertainty when they are uncertain, they might contract a habit which would be fatal to them, since it might in the end reduce them to having no finer aesthetic insight than their neighbours.

Two other points may be touched on here. Firstly, if a man has a wish to derive pleasure from one of the main recognized sources, as pictures, and feels that he knows nothing about them—even his likes and dislikes being founded upon nothing permanent—let him first discover for what branch of painting and for what masters he feels the preference that he is in the least doubtful about. It may be he likes sporting pictures, it may be early Florentine work; it may be that he hates Italian work, but is very fond of modern English landscape; no matter what it is, provided he has a decided liking for any one branch he has the key to the course he should adopt—he should go in for that line and stick to it until it has opened a door for him to go further; but if, after all pains taken, he cannot discover that he likes one branch either of painting or music better than another, then there is no hope for him. We have heard scores of people say they were “so fond of pictures,” and “so fond of music,” who on being asked what kind of music or pictures they liked replied at once, “Oh, *any* music,” or “pictures,” as the case may be. This is the only condition that is hopeless, for it is the only one which supplies no solid nucleus or base of operations.

The second point is the choice of an adviser when we are conscious of a desire towards a certain subject but feel that we have not the requisite knowledge to make our likings reliable even though we may know what they are. An adviser in this case being necessary, it is well to choose, from those who have any pretence to competency of judge-



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ment, not the one who passes as having the greatest ability, but the one whom we feel to be the best *qua* "sensible man all round." This adviser may not himself be able to speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but he will know how to distinguish the tongues of angels from those of ordinary mortals. Unfortunately it takes a good man to know a good man, so that we come round in the end to this—which is indeed perfectly true, but does not greatly help us—that the collection will be as the collector, and that a man is not more likely than water is to rise above his own level for long together or to any considerable extent. It is the old story; the Lord hath mercy on whom he will have mercy and whom he willeth he hardeneth. On the other hand when there is to be no mercy shown there will be no desire felt for mercy.

People do as a general rule get what they want if they want hard enough, though some get it after less wanting than others. The history of all animal and vegetable organism from the amoeba upwards is but a living commentary upon this text—that if an organism knows what gives it pleasure and persistently endeavours to obtain it, it will in the end do so, though it be even as the changing of the Ethiopian's skin, or the spots of the leopard; and, conversely, that when there is no desire there is no development, save of such diseased, cancerous growth as heralds approaching dissolution. The main art, then, of knowing what gives us pleasure consists in wanting to know it; and the extraordinary but unquestionable fact is simply this—that there are very few who care greatly about knowing what they like or dislike, but that the few who do are the salt that seasons the earth.

## PROFICIENCY AND ORIGINALITY

## NOTE

THIS piece was among the mss. by Butler which came to me on Streatfeild's death in 1919. If I had known of it in time I should have included it in the published *Note-Books* (1912), which does contain a long note on "Genius." I do not know why Butler kept it out of his *Note-Books*, but he may have intended to include it in that sixth volume for which more than enough material had accumulated at the time of his death (see Preface to *Note-Books*).

H.F.J.

## *Proficiency and Originality*

IF THEY ARE TO COME MUST DO SO AS THE boiling of an unwatched pot. They must come as a consequence of familiarity with small subordinate aims, which, and not proficiency in the art as a whole, were mainly thought of; as invertebrate animals got vertebrae not by seeing vertebrae a long way off and making for them, but by attending to their own interests till the vertebrae came fairly within reach—on which, of course, they made an effort towards them, as bubbles on a cup of tea that rush into one another when they have got pretty close.

This is why men who in the end have become singularly both original and proficient have often given little early promise. It is sometimes said of such men that the power and originality must have been there from the outset but was concealed through modesty in the individual or stupidity in the bystanders; it is, however, more likely that the power of seeing things in new lights and in a large number of their bearings—which is what originality and proficiency imply—was not yet present, but grew up as the fruit of observation. If scraps of their early work have been preserved it is as likely as not that no promise will be detected in them even when they are seen by the light of a later success, indeed not unfrequently folly and extravagance are their most noticeable characteristics. The authors in this last case were probably trying to be original and had not yet found out that the surest way to miss originality is to aim directly at it.

The amoeba never strove after mere originality at any point in its journey manwards; true, it often enough had to be original, but it never wanted to be so; its chief aim was rather to avoid originality and to do in all things as others had done before it—with occasional excursions only into the land of novelty if a tempting bait allured. What was mainly aimed at was the turning the present moment to the best account.

It is almost a truism to say that the greatest and most original men have generally been the largest borrowers. Take Handel for example; a more original composer never

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lived, but it seems to have been his practice to help himself to whatever he liked from the works of his predecessors—always bettering it, but always building on something that had gone before—if, that is to say, he could find something tolerably to his purpose. If Handel thought a passage appropriate he suited the action to the word and appropriated it. So again with the greatest masters of painting—the more original they were the more they took, and the more they took the more original they became.

Originality is like a man's soul. He who would find it loses it, and he who would lose it finds it. Or, again, it is like wealth and power which are chary of being caught by those who pursue them with too much haste, but fall rather to those who know how to hold what comes within their reach but do not stretch out their hands too eagerly. He will assuredly end in being most original who has thought least about himself and considered most his subject and his audience or spectators. Few know what an original thing it is in any man to be perfectly straightforward and business-like; yet if a man knows this effectually he may take what he likes from others and his very touch will make it his own. For all that is called original is either taken directly from nature, or from past interpreters of nature, and nothing in any art is original in the sense of being an equivocal or spontaneous generation. *Omne vivum ex vivo* holds good for pictures, music, and books as much as for organized beings—they must all be begotten of something after their own kind, from which they will descend with modification if they are to be themselves living and fertile; and they must all go through the embryonic stages, starting from small beginnings. To be original is not so much to say or do things that have had no origin except in a man's own self, as to get as near as may be to the origin of those ideas which one may be trying to express, to understand the sources from which they spring, and thus to be able to present them more clearly and concisely before those for whose use they are intended.

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It is the same with style as with originality. There is no such certain way to miss either one or the other as to aim at it directly. A man may dress better or worse, but the dress will still be the expression of the man through and beyond which his sincerity or insincerity will appear sooner or later, and it is by these that he will in the end be judged. It is self that is being sought when style or originality is sought, and self-seeking in art is death.

*9th October 1885.*



THE SUBDIVISION OF THE ORGANIC WORLD INTO ANIMAL AND  
VEGETABLE



THIS Lecture, given by Butler at the Working Men's College, Great Ormond Street, on 19th March 1887 (see *Memoir*, ii, 41, 47), was afterwards printed in the May and June numbers of *Science and Art*. The editor in a note says: "Having applied to Mr. Butler for notes of his lecture, and as he has kindly furnished us with the ms., we print it in full." It is now for the first time reprinted from cuttings preserved by Butler in which he made no corrections.

A.T.B.

## *The Subdivision of the Organic World into Animal and Vegetable*<sup>1</sup>

WHEN WE LOOK AROUND US WE SEE that most things fall readily into one or the other of two classes or kingdoms, that at first sight seem so broadly distinguished as to have little or nothing in common.

We call these two classes, or kingdoms, "organic" and "inorganic."

The first comprises everything that lives, the second whatever does not live, as, for example, earth, water, air, and other gaseous combinations. I do not mean to say that this classification has no skeletons in its cupboards—if so great a confusion of metaphor may be pardoned—but the present is not a convenient time for opening these cupboards, and I will not therefore call more attention to them than I can help.

Our concern this evening is with the first of the two kingdoms above mentioned, I mean with the organic. Looking, then, at the organic world only, we are struck with the fact that as things fall by a natural line of cleavage into organic and inorganic, so the organic cleaves naturally into two main sub-kingdoms, the animal and vegetable.

We seldom in everyday life come across anything as to which we are in doubt whether to call it animal or vegetable.

True, there are such living forms. There is one, for example, called *Volvox globator*, which begins life as a perfectly well-marked animal, swimming freely in whatever direction it thinks proper, and settling down eventually as a seaweed; and I believe there are other seaweeds within the scheme of whose existence a similar radical change of front is comprised; but these troublesome doubtful cases—these vermin, as it were, that infest the holes and corners and outlying districts of our classification—betray the same germs of incipient moral consciousness that certain other small creatures do when they hop away and keep themselves as far as possible out of sight.

<sup>1</sup> From *Science and Art*, May and June 1887.

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When we come to think of it, it is our own fault if we find the classification of such a creature as the *Volvox globator* troublesome. If people will use an organ which entered so little into the original scheme of animal or vegetable life as a microscope did, they must not complain at having to re-cast many of their old notions. If they extend their organization, it is inevitable that they should ere long have to extend their ideas. We cannot so much as touch the organization of any organism without to some extent re-modelling its mind, and conversely we cannot produce any change, however slight, in the mind of any organism without to some extent re-modelling its body at the same time. Body and mind (whatever these may be, for we know nothing of either of them by itself and apart from all admixture with the other) are so closely connected that to touch one is to touch both, and thus it has happened that the tacking on of a microscope to our eyes has involved the tacking on of the idea of a *Volvox globator* to our minds. Such an addition to the family of our ideas must always remain a thorn in the sides of those who wish to tie up all animals with a piece of red tape neatly into one parcel and put them into a pigeon-hole docketed "Animal World, Royal Zoological Society," and to tie up all plants in another perfectly tidy parcel, and put them in another pigeon-hole docketed "Vegetable World, Royal Botanical Society." We have, however, ourselves only to thank if we are incommoded by a form which cannot properly be tied up and pigeon-holed as either animal or vegetable.

Left to itself the *Volvox globator* is not aggressive. No quiet peaceable person going about the streets of London need be afraid of having a *Volvox globator* rush out upon him from round a corner, nor will he find himself rudely hustled by any other form of life about which he is in doubt whether it is animal or vegetable. If he will let the *Volvox globator* alone, the *Volvox globator* will let him alone; and if he will not let a sleeping *Volvox* lie, he must not cry out at finding it a much more difficult customer to tackle than he thought

## *The Subdivision of the Organic World*

for. True, it is very small, but if Nature is in a mood for puzzling she can pack a large difficulty in a very little compass; she can ask a riddle in a very few words which it will take the best of us all his time to guess; nevertheless, if people will mind their own business, they will come across cats in plenty and cabbages in plenty, but unless they are under the influence of either drin k or microscope they will not come across anything about which there shall be any doubt as to whether it is more cat than cabbage or cabbage than cat. Our initial assumption therefore, that the organic world falls into two broadly marked, easily distinguishable groups—animal and vegetable—is not likely to be challenged.

This, indeed, is as notorious as it is true, but it is not so notorious how or why this subdivision has been effected.

I never remember to have seen the question, why there should be any subdivision in the organic world at all, even asked, much less answered. Why should there be more than one single form of life? Why not the amoeba, the whole amoeba, and nothing but the amoeba, as the only form of life upon the face of the globe? Why not if once an amoeba always an amoeba? or at any rate, why should there not have been one main class only, so that all forms of life should have been either animal or vegetable?

Again, if there was to be more than one main class, why should there be only two? Why not have half a dozen at once?

The inorganic world falls into three main classes—solid, fluid, and gaseous.

The animal and vegetable kingdoms again are subdivided into an almost infinite number of subordinate groups. Why should not the main groups, if there were to be more than one, be more than two, and why should these two be so broadly distinguished from one another?

It has been said that plants were made so that animals might have something to eat. This sounds well.

A great many animals certainly do eat a great many vegetables, and the arrangement seems to suit them, but it

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is a long cry from this to saying that the sole object of plants in growing is a desire to gratify the animals who may be kind enough to come and eat them.

Most plants show unmistakable hostility to the animal world. They scratch, cut, prick, sting, make bad smells, secrete the most dreadful poisons, frighten insects with delicate nervous systems by exploding—as the balsam does when ripe on being touched—hide themselves, grow in inaccessible places, and tell lies so plausibly that they deceive even their subtlest foes.

Others, again, lay traps smeared with bird-lime to catch insects or persuade them to drown themselves in pitchers which they have made of their leaves; others make themselves into living rat-traps which close with a spring on any insect which comes within their reach. Others, again, notably a kind of orchis that grows in Borneo or South America, I forget which, make their flowers in the shape of a certain fly that is a great pillager of honey, and when the real fly approaches this orchis, it thinks it is already bespoken, and goes on to pillage some other flowers instead.

If, on the other hand, they think an animal can be of use to them, they will coax it by every artifice in their power. It is not doubted among botanists that the lovely colouring of many Alpine plants has been assumed for the express purpose of alluring insects to come and fertilize them, they well knowing that without special inducement the insects would not be at the trouble of flying such a long way up.

These facts, and a thousand others that speak volumes as to the morality or immorality of plants, will not be disputed by anyone who keeps an eye upon what is going on in the botanical world; but they do not point in the direction of thinking that plants grow out of pure disinterested regard and unselfish devotion to the interests of animals, nor even indeed that much love of any kind is lost between the two kingdoms.

We take the most succulent and defenceless grasses, and so dispose them that our cows and horses can get at them

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and devour them; and on this we say the grass grows that our cows may come and eat it. It is probable that the grass hates and despises our cows. Nothing can prosper without unbounded though perhaps tacit confidence in the superiority of its own judgement over that of everyone else. Growth is conceit in its extreme development: it is dogmatism incarnate. To have a form at all is to declare that form to be the best that organism can conceive, and the way in which any form will grow depends on the nature of the opinion or opinions which it may have adopted in its own person and in those of its ancestors.

An organism which thinks one set of opinions best will assume one shape; another, which takes a different view of life and of what it is that makes life worth living, will be in another shape; few naturalists will now dispute that the bodily form of any organism is the visible outcome and expression of its opinions.

We see small exemplifications of this principle in the play and expression of people's faces as their thoughts and feelings change. All action is based upon opinion—that is to say, upon conceit, conscious or unconscious, and growth, which is the most concentrated and essential form of organic action, must be founded upon conceit also.

To live at all is, as I have already said, to stick to it, offensively and defensively, that one is one's self right and everyone else wrong. Without this quiet, persistent self-esteem, no organism would be able to carry on the arduous task of living at all. No sooner does this confidence fail than an organism begins to decline in vigour. A dying animal or plant is one that has begun to lose confidence in itself.

Is it not probable that a good, healthy, substantial, well-to-do vegetable looks upon the animal world much as we do upon the vegetable? It may admire, and, perhaps, even patronizingly envy, some of the more picturesque among the animal forms with which it is familiar. "Consider the Solomons in all their glory," we may fancy one of them in a moment of self-abasement to exclaim; "they toil not,

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neither do they spin; but not a rose or a lily among you is arrayed as one of these poor despised monarchs."

Very likely they look upon the *Droserae*, for example, or fly-catching plants, as little better than mere animals, and speak of them as "animating," much as we say of dull, stupid people that they "vegetate." To them we must appear restless ne'er-do-weels, rolling-stones who will gather no moss, who cannot be conceived as ever feeling, much less understanding; for if we felt, they might argue with some speciousness, we should never be able to survive the ceaseless shocks to which our nervous systems are daily and hourly subjected. The wear and tear of animal life must, in their eyes, be insupportable by an organism that could really feel. They will, therefore, have probably settled it that plants alone can either feel or reason; all animal action being only reflex, and destitute of either consciousness or intelligence.

Assuredly, if they could know the way in which we commonly talk about them, they might be able to make a good case for thinking poorly of our intelligence; indeed, whenever I hear a man say that a thing which manages its affairs with so keen an eye to the main chance as a nettle or a blackberry, has no intelligence and does not understand its own business, on the ground that it shows no sign of understanding ours, I always feel that however little intelligence the plant may have the man has even less.

These speculations, however, as to the opinion of plants concerning the animal world may perhaps be too much in the nature of a digression. Our concern to-night is not with the question what animals and plants think about one another, but with the larger one how it is that we have any animals or plants at all, and why we do not have half a dozen living forms that are neither plant nor animal.

Originally, doubtless, there was only a single form presenting any of the characteristics of what we commonly call life, and that form had much more in common with the inorganic than with the organic world.

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A cell of pure protoplasm looks much more like water than it looks like either man or oak, yet to this day all forms of life begin with this lowest form, and start in a simple cell or minute round globule of protoplasm.

Neither eye nor chemical test can detect any difference between the germs from which a oak, a fern, a seaweed, a man, a frog, or a house-fly spring. The germ in each case is a minute round morsel of colourless protoplasm, which if seen for the first time by one who did not know what it was would be thought to have neither life nor promise of life; yet this apparently non-living substance is the most living, and, as many writers maintain, the only living thing that exists at all.

This, perhaps, requires a little explanation. When we see an acorn or a bean, we think we are looking at the germ of the plant which will spring up if the seed is planted in the ground. This is a mistake: the germ, whether of the oak or bean, is invisible to the naked eye. It is a minute object, the presence or absence of which can only be detected by the microscope, or by experiment whether the seed actually grows on being planted. What, then, it may be asked, is the main body of the bean or acorn? The reply is that the visible parts of the acorn or bean are to be regarded in the nature of a testamentary disposition or provision which the parent plant has seen proper to make for the maintenance of its offspring during its minority.

Many insects, as you probably know, make what is to all intents and purposes a last will and testament in favour of their offspring, leaving their money tied up in an old stocking in the child's cradle, so that it may find and enjoy it as soon as it arrives at years of discretion.

There is a kind of wasp that makes a hole several inches deep in the sand, lays her eggs, and then packs along with them a number of green maggots that have no legs, and are well fed, being on the point of turning into chrysalises. The wasp chooses these because they will be able to keep alive and fit for food for some time without eating anything them-



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selves. She packs these maggots so closely that they cannot get away, and they are so much put off their stroke that they cannot turn into chrysalises; but yet she leaves them just enough room to let them continue living till the young larvae of the wasp can get hatched and come and eat them, and she gives each larva just enough to keep it going till the time comes for it to turn into a chrysalis.

There is another insect, called *Cerceris bupresticida*, which buries its eggs in underground cells, and, along with each egg, deposits three beetles which she has captured while they were still young, and which she smears over with a kind of fluid she has found out how to secrete, and which keeps the bodies of the beetles in good condition till her larvae can eat them. What these testamentary dispositions are to the larvae of the several insects that make them, the body and bulk of the seed are to the germ of the plant itself. Field-mice know all about this, and, being obliged to keep their winter store of grain in damp places, where, if the weather is mild, it might begin to grow, they invariably bite out the germs of each seed before they store it.

If we put a bean or an acorn into damp earth, we shall find it begin to grow from one single point only, and the body of the bean or acorn will gradually disappear as the growing germ consumes it.

The parent plant is generally fairly liberal, and leaves its offspring a good deal more than is absolutely necessary for its support. A potato, for example, is intended as maintenance for the half-dozen or so of eyes which it may have; but potato-parings will grow, if set in fairly good soil, almost as well as the sets on which a gardener insists if he is planting a row of potatoes.

So long as the compliment is paid, and the organism gets as much as a single shilling with which it can make believe that things are fairly well with it, it will continue to at least live. Short of this, it will die. To give a final example: the bulk of an acorn or a bean is like the inside of an egg, the greater portion of which is merely the substance and provision

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made for the germ to feed on until it can grow into a chicken and be hatched.

You will probably have perceived that when I declare the germ to be the only living part of what we see as a seed, and call the main bulk of the seed merely the germ's inheritance, or the sum invested by its parents for its advancement in life, I lay it open to anyone to ask what the germ itself is, and how much of this, too, should be regarded not as living, but as a mere investment made by something still more minute than the germ, with the view to maintaining the germ till it arrives at the position of being able to germinate and thus draw on the larger body of resources which lie stored in the seed itself.

I do not deny this, nor yet, can it be denied that this process can be repeated over and over again, till the only living part of the seed proves to be something so tenuous as to be inconceivable by human understanding. It stands to reason that this must be so, but people never say things stand to reason unless they mean being unreasonable; I will not, therefore, pursue this subject further, but will draw the line at the germ, as a convenient though perhaps illogical boundary, and will posit this as the sole original seat of life whether in animal or plant. I will also posit what is universally admitted—I mean that the germs of all living forms are of the same essential kind, and consist of a single cell of protoplasm.

The inference easily deducible from this by those who accept the theory of Descent with Modification, is that plants and animals are not descended one from the other, but that they are both derived from a common ancestral form. Many persons think that vegetable is a lower and earlier form of life than animal, and that animal life was a development from vegetable; this view would make plants and animals stand in the relation of parent and offspring; none of the evidence at our disposal, however, will support this opinion. For let alone that both plants and animals start alike from a source which, is not remarkably suggestive of animal life, is

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still less so of vegetable—let alone this, the lowest known forms of life are animal, not vegetable; the amoeba is the simplest known form that can be distinctly recognized as living; it can be called animal, but it certainly cannot be called vegetable. Moreover, though there are forms of life like the *Volvox globator*, which begin life as animals and then settle down into vegetables, there are no forms known that begin as vegetables and end as animals; if the vegetable were the earlier form of life it is not conceivable that no trace of a vegetable ancestry should appear in the embryonic stages of any animal; no such trace, however, can be found, whereas, as I have already said, traces of a low animal ancestry are left in the earlier stages of sundry low forms of vegetable life; the inference, therefore, is not easy to resist, that plants and animals do not stand to one another in the relation of parents and offspring, but in that, rather, of brother and sister, being two trunks, as it were, that have grown from a common stock, which, if not very like an animal, is still more unlike a vegetable. Here, then, at last we find ourselves faced by the problem which I am trying to elucidate. Why this bifurcation of the tree of life into two main branches? and if into two why into not more than two? Why was all life either animal or vegetable, or, failing this, why is it not half a dozen other things as well as animal and vegetable?

Analogy can alone help us here. To argue from the known to the unknown may not be always safe, but we can never be quite safe, and analogy or judging concerning the unknown by the light of the known is as near safety as we can get. Can we, then, see any ramifications in animal and vegetable life that are like the bifurcation into animal and vegetable—though on a smaller scale? It must be admitted that we can see none so important; we can see no such radical difference between the different kinds of plants and animals as exists between plants and animals generally; still we can see ramifications in the tree of life which form as it were its principal branches, and differ rather in degree than kind

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from the main bifurcation. Can we, again, see other still smaller bifurcations, which make boughs leading from the branches, and which are to these much as the branches themselves are to the bifurcation? Can we see others, again, still smaller, forming as it were twigs of the tree of life, and bearing the same relation to the boughs, as the boughs did to the branches, and as the branches did to the two main divisions of the trunk? It will occur to each of you in answer to this question that if the subdivision of the living world into animal and vegetable is compared to bifurcation in the butt of a tree, the further subdivision of the animal world into mammals, birds, fishes, reptiles, and those still more numerous classes that are somewhat unceremoniously grouped together as invertebrate, and furthermore the subdivision of the vegetable world into its sub-classes, bears a very close analogy to branches. Animals differ more widely from plants than, we will say, mice and humble-bees from one another; the mouse and the humble-bee are both animals, and thus stand in a closer relation to one another than either of them can do to any plant; they are very unlike, but they are also very like; they move freely about, they have homes and families; they eat, drink, sleep, feel pleasure and pain, remember things and forget them, are born and die. It may be said, however, of plants and animals themselves, that though very unlike they are also very like, and have more in common, as each of them organic, than either can have with anything that belongs to the inorganic world. The bifurcation into animal and vegetable is on a larger scale than any subsequent one in either the animal or vegetable kingdom, but it is of the same essential character as all the minor subdivisions; it is a new departure, which does, indeed, involve a gradually increasing divergence, but it is not incompatible with a retention of much in common by each of the divergents; again, the subdivision of each of the main branches of animal and vegetable life into families, genera, species, varieties, and individuals, is only a repetition on a gradually decreasing scale of the same bifurcating

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tendency which was observable in the original division of the animal and vegetable kingdom. Families and genera of animals and plants are to the main division of life into animal and vegetable, as the main branches are to the bifurcation of the butt or stem of a tree; species, again, and varieties, are to families and genera as families and genera to the main divisions; they are to boughs as boughs to main branches, and as main branches are to a truncal division; in every case there is a new departure; but though there is much new there is more old. The inference from this is obvious, namely, that the explanation of the main bifurcation should be looked for in the same causes as those that have induced the smaller ones. As the twig is only the main bifurcation written small, so specific difference is only the difference between animal and vegetable written small; it follows, therefore, that the cause of specific difference, whatever it may be—I mean, the cause, whatever it may be, which brings it about that a horse and an ass, though undoubtedly descended from a common ancestor, should yet be as unlike each other as they are, must, if written larger and broader, be the cause to which we must assign the divergence of the earliest forms of life into animal and vegetable. In other words, the principle underlying the difference between animal and vegetable should be essentially the same as that underlying specific difference. What, then, is the principle underlying specific difference? How is it that we are surrounded by animal and vegetable forms that for the most part fall readily into groups of species, genera, etc.?

To answer this question at full length would compel me to go into the details of the most serious controversy that has agitated the biological world for many years past, and this our time does not allow: I must content myself, therefore, with giving a very meagre outline of the controversy. The older evolutionists, of whom the most remarkable were Buffon, Erasmus Darwin, and Lamarck, believed specific difference to be mainly due to change of desire and habit in consequence of changed surroundings. Every

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organ of every animal or plant has certain special functions to discharge; we have eyes with which to see; it is as much the function of an eye to see as it is the function of a hair-dresser to cut hair or a pew-opener to open pews; it is the function of the ear to hear, of the leg to walk about or kick, of the hand to hold things, and of the arm to lift the hand or extend it. According to the evolutionists of the last century and of the earlier part of the present, long-continued change in the work done, or, to use more scientific language, in the functions discharged, by an organ, lead, in the course of generations, to a permanent modification of the organ itself, so as to make it become better and better adapted to the functions it has to discharge, or, to use more homely language, to the work it has to do; modification in an organ induced by long-continued modification of the function discharged is called functional modification, and it was to the accumulation of small modifications that were in the main functional—due to changed habit, or to changed use and disuse—that specific difference, until the appearance of Mr. Charles Darwin's famous work, the *Origin of Species*, was referred by all who accepted evolution at all. Thus it was held that a blacksmith's arm grew gradually thicker by reason of, and in consequence of, his long use of it, and that if his descendants for many generations were to be all blacksmiths, a good many of them would show unusual strength of arm even as children, and would grow up into a stronger-armed race of men than they would have done if they had not come of a race of blacksmiths. To take another very familiar illustration: they believed that the giraffe gradually acquired a long neck through its habit of feeding upon the boughs of trees, and continually stretching its neck to reach higher and higher boughs, as the lower ones became scarce through having been already browsed upon.

According to this view, the efforts of the organisms themselves have more to do with any successful development they may have ultimately attained than anything else has.

Even effort cannot achieve impossibilities, and it can

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seldom achieve any considerable result at all without perseverance in the face of discouragement and opposition; nevertheless, given time and persistency, neither of which can be well denied to organism, and it is surprising what effort can do. By the early evolutionists it was held to be the main cause of organic modification, and bodily form was looked upon, or at any rate might have been looked upon, as the rendering visible in a material tangible guise, of an otherwise invisible mind, effort, volition, and design; it was regarded as the contact of the seen and unseen worlds; as the point or ground on which the seen vanished and the unseen took visible shape and came and dwelt among us; as the making manifest in flesh of a spirit indwelling in us which we can never know perfectly, but whose existence we could not even suspect but for the mediation, and, as it were, intercession, of bodily organization. The older view of evolution approaches closely to the teaching of St. Paul—namely, that we live and move and have our being in God, He in us, and we in Him; only that the evolutionist will not exclude the lower animals and plants, nor yet even the inorganic world, from participation, however slight, in the spirit of life and love that pervades all things at all times everywhere.

According to the theory of the late Mr. Charles Darwin, the foregoing position, as held by the early evolutionists, is untenable. The giraffe did not get its long neck by trying to reach higher and higher boughs; wading birds did not acquire their stilted legs by wading into deeper and deeper water, and at the same time trying to keep their bodies as high out of it as they could; ducks and Skye-terriers did not get their webbed feet through continually extending their toes so as to get as much purchase as they could over the water. The bodily form of each organism is, indeed, marvellously well adapted to its habits; but that adaptation is not to be connected, or at any rate only to a very secondary extent connected, with the efforts of the organism itself; it is mainly due to the accumulation of happy accidents. If any

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variation due to some one of the many causes that tend to bring about change of form and to interfere with the retention of the normal characteristics of the organism, happened to be favourable, the individuals that were so lucky as to have been born with it would be preserved in times of difficulty, and would transmit their valuable qualities to their descendants, or at any rate to many of their descendants; hence, according to Mr. Darwin, an appearance of design would be produced which was in reality fallacious, the natural preservation, or, as it was commonly called, selection, of the favoured individuals in the struggle for life being enough to account for all the facts without supposing the efforts of the organism itself (and these involve design) to have had more than a very secondary share in the result.

This sounds plausible, and for some years was accepted with little difference of opinion among all who had the reputation of being pillars of the biological world. In 1864, however—that is to say, some five years after the *Origin of Species* was published—Mr. Herbert Spencer, in §166 of his *Principles of Biology*, pointed out that no such result as was supposed by Mr. Darwin could follow as a consequence of the accumulation of accidental variations, inasmuch as accidental variations would not accumulate. The weak place in the late Mr. Charles Darwin's system lay, according to Mr. Spencer, in the fact that the struggle for existence was liable in each successive generation, or indeed in each successive season, to be waged upon new lines; so that a variation which was favourable, and hence preserved, in one generation might be unfavourable, and hence lost, in the next. Mr. Spencer contended that, if there was no general principle underlying variation on which it mainly depended, there could be nothing to insure, or even make it possible, that the acquisitions of one generation would not be lost in the next, through the preservation of some other more favourable quality that had nothing to do with the one that had just proved so useful, and which, therefore, did not lead in any way to its being preserved. He justly admitted that



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if the 'conditions of life were so simple that an organism could only vary favourably in one direction, or if some one function were supremely important and all others of less moment, then the results supposed by Mr. Darwin would certainly come about; but even the simplest forms of life can vary beneficially in a great number of ways, and temporary benefits obtained only at the expense of a constant reversal of policy, as it were, in each succeeding generation, would clash, and thwart one another, rather than accumulate. Living forms at best in this case would have been Jacks of all trades, and masters of none. True, any organism is Jack of a good many trades, nevertheless it is so distinctly master in some few special branches that it is impossible to suppose accumulated accident to have been the main source of the proficiency, without supposing accident to have more method in it than accident can have. Proficiency, wherever we can watch it and know all about it, is found to spring from long-continued effort; nor is there any reason to suppose that the marvellous proficiency displayed by every organism in the pursuance of its several instincts, can have arisen except from the same source as all other proficiency; namely, in long-sustained effort and volition.

Another fatal objection to Mr. Darwin's system was put forward about twenty years ago by the late Professor Fleeming Jenkin. He contended that if the variations whose accumulation amounted eventually to specific difference were in the main fortuitous, accidental, spontaneous, not due to any principle of general and permanent application, they could not be depended on to occur in sufficient numbers at the same time, and with sufficient steadiness, to prevent the favourable modification, whatever it might be, from being swamped and lost in the multitude of unmodified forms. These two objections (which, by the way, were repeatedly made during the late Mr. Darwin's life without eliciting any rejoinder) are fatal to his theory that modification is in the main a matter of mere luck, and of the accumulation of fortunate accidents. No doubt there is a great deal of luck,

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but there is also a great deal of something that can be no more called luck than it can be called luck when a gambler is found with a couple of aces up his sleeve; it is with great pleasure, therefore, that I observe biologists generally returning to the old system of Lamarck and of Erasmus Darwin, whereby organic modification was held to be chiefly due to changed efforts on the part of the organisms, varying in consequence of changed ideas concerning their advantage. To this opinion I therefore revert with confidence.

We now return to our original question. We have settled that the division of life into animal and vegetable is only an early and important application of the same principle that has led to the further division of each of the two main trunks into families, orders, genera, species, and varieties. We have also laid it down that these further divisions are due to changed habit in consequence of changed opinion concerning advantage. The conclusion then is easy that the division of life at large into animal and vegetable must be due to an early division of habit in consequence of a fundamental difference of opinion on some point about which difference was possible inasmuch as an equally good case might be made out for either. If we can find a question with which life was likely to be confronted at an early period, and about which opinion might reasonably divide, two courses, and only two, being open, so that the organism must take one or other, but not both, and must adapt its mode of life generally to the opinion it has chosen—if we can find such an early point of difference, we may suspect strongly that we have here the rock on which the main stream of life split up into the two great though lesser streams—animal and vegetable.

It should be borne in mind that we have got to find two courses of action that are equally reasonable developments of a third from which they both spring. The *pros* and *cons* for either course must be very nicely balanced, otherwise the course which was attended with least advantage would probably involve the gradual extinction of the living forms that adopted it, but there being supposed two, and only two,

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possible modes of action, very evenly balanced as regards advantage, the ultimate development of two corresponding main forms of life is a *sequitur* from the admission that form varies as habit, and habit as opinion concerning advantage. If there were three, four, or five such opinions, all equally balanced, or nearly so, then we ought to have three, four, or five main subdivisions of life. As things are, we have only two. Moreover, the question we are in search of must be one of detail only. It must open up something new without trying to re-open and unsettle the old. It must not be a question, for example, about the advisability of eating and drinking, getting rid of used-up matter, sleeping for longer or shorter periods at a time, breathing, that is to say taking in oxygen and nitrogen and giving out carbon. It must not be a question about having a local habitation, about growing to maturity, continuing the species, and dying. There is no fundamental difference between animals and plants on any of these points; we want some question of detail, which, without touching the main question of whether it was well to eat and drink at all, should deal only with some minor point, as, for example, with the most convenient way of getting food, and the best way of consuming it when it has been found. Can we then, I would ask again, see any matter on which it might be expected that opinion would be likely to be early divided into two, and into only two, main divisions, no third course being possible?

I submit that we can see such a matter in the question whether it is better to sit still and take what comes, or go about and see what we can find. Plants are the embodiment—the making manifest in flesh—of the one principle, and animals of the other. It may be said that this question does not admit of two answers, inasmuch as it is clearly better to go about and see what we can find; nevertheless, as a matter of fact, plants do sit still, and yet they get along quite nicely. They thrive in all manner of different ways all the world over, and have so thriven from time immemorial. On the other hand, animals do not sit still, but they, too, get along

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quite nicely; they, too, have thriven in all manner of ways all the world over, and have been so thriving from time immemorial. No one can say that animals are more vigorous and thrive better than plants, or plants than animals; it is six of one and a half-dozen of the other, which class is most contented in the thing that it is pleased to call its mind. We forget that we no longer approach this question without bias. No doubt it is better for *us* to lead an active locomotive life, but it by no means follows that it was better for the earliest forms of life to do so. What is one organism's meat is another's poison; we have been so deeply and irrevocably committed by our forefathers, and by our own more recent practice, to a locomotive life, and we are so much inclined to call everyone who differs from us a fool, that we generally settle the question off-hand in our own favour, as a shoemaker when he says that there is nothing like leather. So, probably, do plants; and this, doubtless, having regard to the pressure of business and the unwisdom of allowing settled questions to be opened at all, is the most sensible thing to do. If we re-open one there is no knowing how many more we may not be called upon to re-open presently; even a bad settlement is better than no settlement at all, and we can only have a settlement by refusing to let anyone else unsettle us—that is to say, by sticking to it that we are right, and that those who differ from us are wrong. This simple and necessary tendency—the tendency to stick in a groove when we have got into one, and to change as little as we can even when we do change—enters so incessantly into all our thoughts and actions that we rarely notice it, but there can be no doubt that it lies at the root of specific and generic difference.

The point at issue is not what an organism may say that has already staked its all upon a certain answer, but what might be held by one which, like the lowest forms of life, had not committed itself very decidedly to either. Such an organism would doubtless be deeply impressed with the difficulty of coming to a decision, and it is not surprising that many of its descendants should have taken one view and

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others another. Even now, how often do we not see people fly into the arms of death in trying to escape them? How often do we not see people go all the world round in search of money, when, if they had only stayed where they were and made the most of the opportunities that were close at hand, money would have come wooing to them, as eagerly as they went wooing after money. On the one hand, there is a narrow field with an attention concentrated on every detail in connection with it; on the other, there is a wider field with less minute scrutiny of every part of it. Who shall say that one of these courses offers any very marked advantage over the other? They will tend to develop very different characteristics according as the one or the other is adopted as the main principle of action; the one course will encourage versatility, and general at the expense of special capacities; the other will tend to make specialists of those who adopt it at the expense of their general powers. There can be no doubt which we should ourselves choose, but any one whose mind is not as narrow as the ground covered by a very ordinary-sized vegetable, will hasten to admit that what is best suited to himself may be but ill adapted to another and different organization.

Neither class has been quite consistent; who ever was or is? Logic and consistency are for the gods and for the inorganic kingdom only, if even they are for these; for the inorganic kingdom is at times guilty of the grossest inconsistencies, and I do not gather that the gods are any better in this respect than they should be. Every opinion carried to the bitter end will be found absurd; it may be logical according to the rules, but it will be of no use for business purposes. The mean, which is alone practical, is always illogical and abounding in compromises which are utterly indefensible according to rule or principle. So plants throw out roots, boughs, tendrils, and leaves—this is a kind of locomotion; and, as Dr. Erasmus Darwin long since pointed out, they do in other ways sometimes approach nearly to what may be called travelling. A man of logical, consistent

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temperament will never look at a bough, a root, or a tendril, without regarding it as a melancholy and unprincipled denial on the part of an organism of its most cherished convictions. On the other hand, many classes of animals such as oysters, mussels, barnacles, and sea-anemones have discarded all this going to and fro and running about; they tried it, and did not find it come to so much as other more fussy organisms said it did, so they turned it up, and took to sticking in one place as plants do. To do them justice there are a great many of them, and they seem for the most part in very fair health and spirits. Spiders, again, are habitual liars-in-wait rather than travellers after food. They make a web, and take the flies that come instead of going a bout after the flies. Still, in spite of these exceptional cases, in which each great class inclines towards the course adopted by the other, I believe it is in the main reasonable to set the one opinion, that it is better to go in search of prey, as formulated and finding organic expression in animals; and the other, that it is better to be on the look-out to make the best of what chance brings them, in plants. Some few intermediate forms, such as the *Kolvox globator*, of which I have already spoken, still, according to this view, record to us the long struggle during which the schism was not yet complete, and the halting between two opinions which some vacillating organisms might be expected to exhibit. Doubtless there were in the first instance many more such hesitators, but they suffered the fate that generally attends on those who cannot make up their minds, and have had to make way for others that know how to take a side and stick to it.

And now I must bring this lecture to a conclusion. To repeat briefly, I have asked you to see plants and animals as differing essentially in the same way though in greater degree than tigers and lions or horses and donkeys differ; that is to say, I have asked you to see them as only two great species of the common genus Life. This is what you all do in practice, and always have been doing, whether you know it or not. I then asked you to adopt the Lamarckian rather

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than the Charles Darwinian view of the origin of species, and refer specific difference mainly to change of habit in consequence of changed opinion concerning advantage. 'I then enquired on what subject the opinion of the earliest organisms was likely to be divided, and answered that the relative advantages of a nomad or wandering and of a stationary life presented much the sort of question we were in search of, and concluded that the existence of two, and only two, equally flourishing and equally widely spread forms, animal and vegetable, must be referred to the fact that the considerations in favour of each of these courses were very evenly balanced, and that between one or other of these courses organisms had got to choose, so that no third form was likely to be permanent. You will doubtless perceive that this view involves the omnipresence of mind and intelligence of a limited, but none the less effectual, kind as indwelling in, and informing, organic life; and you are probably aware that this is the very point which the follower of the late Mr. Charles Darwin most peremptorily reject. This, however, is no fitting occasion for the pursuance of a controversy that involves questions of so much magnitude and difficulty.' Those of you who may feel sufficient interest in the subject to wish more fully to understand the difference between the Lamarckian and Charles Darwinian views of evolution, will find them contrasted at some length in my recent book, *Luck, or Gunning, as the main means of Organic Modification?*—a copy of which I have brought for your library this evening.

## , CROESUS'S KITCHEN-MAID





THE FIRST NUMBER OF *THE UNIVERSAL REVIEW*, edited by Harry Quilter, appeared in May 1888. It published ten articles by Butler between that date and December 1890, when the last number appeared.

In May 1892 Quilter proposed to republish these ten articles in one volume, to be prefaced by "a little essay" or Butler's writing by Quilter (*Memoir*, ii, 65, 101, 135-136). This led to some correspondence in which was discussed the idea of including in Quilter's volume "The Humour of Homer," a lecture which Butler had delivered at the Working Men's College in January of that year. But the lecture was not available because of arrangements for its publication already made with Messrs. Metcalfe and Co. of Cambridge. Whereupon Butler, who was preparing to start for his first visit to Trapani with his head full of the problems of the Odyssey, wrote to Quilter (1st May 1892) making an alternative suggestion:

"I have abundant and most aggravating and impudent matter about Penelope and King Menelaus which I could throw into an article like the classical part of 'Ramblings in Cheapside.'

"I have also an article in great part written called 'Croesus's Kitchen-Maid' which has nothing to do with Croesus or classics but has, I fancy, a good deal of quiet devilment—but I am very busy and shall not be able to make these articles very long. . . .

"If I write the article or articles above referred to, please don't say that they were written for your collection; let it be supposed that they were copy left on your hands for *The Universal Review* and not used before the Review was discontinued."

Nothing came of Quilter's wish to reprint Butler's articles, and at the time I wrote the *Memoir* I supposed that by "an article in great part written called 'Croesus's Kitchen-Maid,'" Butler meant a sketch with that title which occupies nearly three pages in one of his ms. Note-Books. At the head of the first page are these words: "Written abt.

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Nov. 1880. Edited Dec. 21, 1893"; and the same words are repeated at the head of the second and third pages, except that the date of editing is "Sept. 27, 1894," showing that he gave the editing of his notes a nine months' rest from December 1893 to September 1894. I used this sketch, together with as much as I wanted of four other notes in the ms. *Note-Books* headed (1) "High and Low Life"; (2) "Rothschild's Kitchen-Maid"; (3) "Diseased Solicitor"; and (4) "The Limits of the Body" to construct the note in the published *Note-Books* which is headed "Croesus and his Kitchen-Maid," to which I appended this footnote:

"The five notes here amalgamated together into 'Croesus and his Kitchen-Maid' were to have been part of an article for *The Universal Review*, but, before Butler wrote it, the Review died. I suppose, but I do not now remember, that the article would have been about Mind and Matter or Organs and Tools, and, possibly, all the concluding notes of this group [of notes] beginning with 'Our Cells' would have been introduced as illustrations."

Among Butler's mss. which came to me on Streatfeild's death in February 1919 I found two attempts at articles on this subject, the existence of which, if I had ever known of it, I had forgotten. They are undated, and they, or one of them, may be the article referred to in his letter to Quilter. Still, it may be that in writing to Quilter he was referring to the sketch of 1880, and these two undated articles may be attempts to polish that sketch up into a full-dress article for *The Universal Review*. If so they must have been written before the Review died (December 1890), and probably not after 1893, when he began editing the original sketch. This does not explain why he should have headed the second and longer attempt with the word "Chapter" as though he had intended it to form part of some book. These two attempts at articles now follow and though they contain little, perhaps nothing, that is not said equally well elsewhere yet they throw an interesting light on Butler's method of working.

H. F. J.

## *Groesus's Kitchen-Maid*

### FIRST ATTEMPT

I REMEMBER TO HAVE SEEN PROFESSOR MIVART reported as complaining of the ambiguity which lurks under the words "we know," and proceeding to argue that herein must lie the fallacy involved in such expressions as Unconscious Memory, and Inconscious Intelligence. Those who are on the look-out for ambiguity can find it even in expressions that seem most clear and irrefragable; "scratch the obvious and you will find the inscrutable"; there is uncertainty even in the utmost certainty, and certainty in the utmost uncertainty; it is the ease and cheapness with which strange progressions both of harmony and discord can be devised by one who harps on these strings that has led so many professional mystery-mongers to show such marked preference for them.

Professor Mivart implied, if I remember rightly, that the ambiguity lay in the word "know," but I think that any one who is in a captious humour will find the "we" just as ambiguous. Personally I cannot find the faintest particle of ambiguity in either the one word or the other. I know very well whether I know a thing or whether I do not, and if there is any doubt about the matter I settle it that I do not know. So much for "know." I know not less certainly what is meant by "I" or "we," and am not going to be logicked into an ambiguity which no one but for logic will entertain. Still there are the Professor Mivarts to be considered; they are a numerous and important body, and it is an old established canon that when there is no reply, judgement goes by default. I prefer, therefore, at some inconvenience to myself, to join issue with Professor Mivart and maintain that the ambiguity lies not in the "know" so much as in the "we."

For there are two "we's." There is the organized "we" of the individual, that is to say the individual regarded as a whole, and there is the "we" of our component cells. The first of these corresponds with the collective organized government of a country as it were England, and regards

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the country as a whole to the neglect of the individuals composing it; the second has regard to the individual members of the nation, and disregards the national existence as a whole. These two "we's" may be ignorant of one another's existence. The state knows little of the individual; and the individual is, for the most part, but very imperfectly alive to the working of the state; but they are essential to one another and any serious injury either to the collective "we" or to the individual "we's" reacts immediately on the other.

It may be said perhaps that this parallelism is allegorical and does not hold closely enough to warrant our insisting upon it. This, however, would hardly seem to be the case; for the tendency of all the best recent literature upon these subjects is to emphasize the closeness of the analogy between "a body" and "a body corporate"; indeed, the very words "corporate" and "corporation" show that plain people have long since thought the analogy important enough to make them insist upon it in their daily talk. I need hardly, therefore, waste the reader's time by insisting farther on the fact, which I have already insisted on elsewhere, that our personality, which we designate as "I," is in reality the consensus and full-flowing river of a number of tributary "we's," each one of which has an "I" or personality of its own; nor yet that each one of these subordinate "I's" is composed of still more subordinate "I's," each one of which has an individuality and personality of its own; and so on down as far as we can see anything at all. Any reader of current literature on these subjects will be aware how close and sound the analogy between the body and its members on the one hand, and the nation or body corporate and its members on the other really is. My point, however, is that it is here that Professor Mivart may find the explanation of the difficulty he has in admitting that we may both know and not know a thing at one and the same time. It is because the "we's" are not the same; there is one "we" that knows, and another, "we" that does not know.

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To make this perfectly clear we have only to note how a "head" office (and the use of the word "head" in this relation tells its own story) may know nothing of details that are of essential importance to the working of the body over which it presides, and which, in former times, it spent much time and trouble in arranging, but has long abandoned to subordinate departments. An institution such, for example, as the London and North Western Railway, must have numbers of subordinate corporations by way of local stations large and small, and department of all kinds, which work with the smoothness and rapidity of a reflex action, so that normally the "we" of the head-office knows nothing about them. But it is not fair to argue that therefore the "we" of the individual departments, whose consensus it is that forms the other "we," does not know all about these details perfectly well.

### SECOND ATTEMPT.

Professor Mivart complains of the ambiguity which lurks in the words "we know" and proceeds to show that here must be found the fallacy underlying the use of such expressions as Unconscious Memory and Intelligence. For my own part I would complain of the ambiguity which lurks in the word "we" and would ascribe to this the main difficulty which Professor Mivart finds in admitting that "we" can know a thing without knowing that "we" know it.

For there are two "we's." There is the organized "we" of the whole individual, corresponding with the collective organized government of a country, as it were England, which acts for the country as a whole and is more especially the country, but which knows little or nothing of each unit of the nation; and there is the "we" of our component cells, which correspond with the individuals of which the nation is composed, and which may know little or nothing of the central government. It is easy to say that this parallelism is merely allegorical, and does not hold with sufficient closeness to warrant our laying stress upon it. This is not so;

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the tendency of all the best recent literature upon these subjects is to emphasize the closeness of the analogy between a "body" and "a body corporate"; indeed, the very word "corporation" shows how long since plain matter-of-fact people have seen this and thought it so important as to insist on it in their common language. I will not waste the reader's time with arguments to show that, as I said in *Life and Habit*, what we call our "we" is in reality the consensus and full-flowing river of a number of tributary "we's" each one of which has an individuality of its own. Any reader of Mr. Herbert Spencer will see how close and sound the analogy really is. My point is that here we may find the explanation of the fact that we can both know a thing and not know it at one and the same time; just as a government or head-office (and here I would ask the reader to note how naturally we use the word "head" in connection with a central organizing department) may know nothing of details now which it once took much time and trouble to arrange, but has long abandoned to subordinate departments; or just as, on the other hand, individual citizens in great numbers may know much of which the country as an organized whole knows nothing.

We see with some clearness worlds, states, cities, wards, households, individuals, and the cells of which the individuals are composed. Beyond these at one end is the possibility that our earth and other worlds are only molecules of an organized whole of which we have no conception, and that this organized whole itself is but a molecule of another, and so *ad infinitum*; and at the other end we have the molecules and atoms of which the cells are composed going down and down as far as we choose to follow them. We must leave these extremes; but we observe so close an analogy between the items we can observe with comfort that we are warranted in using the part which we can see clearly in one case as a means of elucidating a part which corresponds to it in another case, but which we cannot reach. Let us at any rate assume for the moment that the parallelism between a large household and an individual, regarded as a congeries of compo-

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nent cells, is so great that if we know what goes on in one case we may guess very fairly what does so in the other. Instead, in fact, of studying the state by the light of the household, as has been often done, let us study the individual by the light of the household, and see whether we like what we get thus or no.

In low life each unit of nucleated protoplasm is as it were a servant of all work. The duties of the servants are not specialized as they are in high life. But even in high life, when there is some unwonted disturbance in the family, the organs, or cells—that is to say the servants—revert to a more primary undifferentiated condition and discharge each other's duties in a way for which we did not give them credit. They do things which it is not their place to do, and which they were not engaged for. But the less highly differentiated the servant is the more readily can he or she do this.

Again, when a great establishment is broken up, not simply by the death of an owner whose heir succeeds him, and things go on much as they did before, but by bankruptcy when everything is sold and the whole organism is dissolved, then the least specialized and differentiated members of the household, such as the scullery-maid and stable-boys, soon grow into some other organism. They start anew easily in some new or already established combinations, whereas the more specialized and differentialized members, as the steward, or old housekeeper, may very likely never repair their loss, and will sometimes even die, just as a bit of skin or a finger may be grafted from one body on to another but not a leg or an arm.

So from the other point of view, if a millionaire's kitchen-maid is dismissed he knows no more about it than of the old skin that comes off his hands when he dries them after washing. It is as though some insignificant cell were scratched out of him without his even knowing it; but the kitchen-maid knows it very well and the other servants know it, and the housekeeper or the major-domo who dismissed the kitchen-maid knows it. The household as a whole knows



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it—probably the only person throughout the establishment who does not know it is the head of the household—and the dismissal cannot be said to have been effected unconsciously merely because the head knew nothing about it. Moreover, he did know it, for he knew it through his subordinates: *qui novit per alium novit per se* is just as true as *qui facit per alium facit per se*. He only did not know it acutely because he had set up a department through which it could be done in due course, and as long as all went normally this was sufficient; but if the servant did not go away normally the department through which these matters were arranged would communicate at once with the governing authority, and consciousness would be resumed by him of a matter in respect of which he had long passed into an unconscious state.

We ought not to imagine that a thing is done unconsciously merely because the consciousness is not carried up to the central ganglia within our brain. There is every reason to believe, as I am told, was held by the late Mr. G. H. Lewes, that the subordinate ganglia are just as conscious as the higher ones within the limits to which the sphere of their activity is confined—as a child, though conscious of so many fewer things than a man, is just as conscious as the man of that of which he is conscious at all. We should not say that habitual action is done unconsciously, we should say that it is done departmentally and without reference to the head-office, until something goes wrong of which the department thinks the head-office should be apprised. The organism as a whole is conscious of every detail, however trifling, but it is conscious of them through organized departments and not through the central government. At any rate analogy points strongly in the direction of thinking that the unconsciousness in respect of habitual actions which has been so much insisted on is only apparent, and no more extends to the subordinate cells who attend to the particular department than the unconsciousness of the millionaire of the trouble taken in making him an apple pie extends to the cook who makes the pie.

As a general rule, if a great man's kitchen-maid is dis-

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charged and a new one engaged it is as though he lost a cell or two of his flesh and grew new ones. The operation will probably pass unnoticed. But as even the slightest cut may sometimes end in death, so the dismissal of even a kitchen-maid may prove very serious. Thus the cook, a valued servant, may take the kitchen-maid's part and go too, and the new cook may spoil the dinner, and upset the great man's temper and make him ill; and from this may come all manner of complications. Nevertheless injury to so unimportant a part of the organism as a scullery-maid is seldom dangerous. It is when organs discharging such vital functions as those discharged by our banker or solicitor are out of order that we are seriously incommoded.

If some catastrophe leads to the break-up of the household the scullery-maids and outdoor men, and generally the least highly differentiated members of the household, can get new places—that is to say can adapt themselves to new bodies corporate much more easily than the more highly differentiated, as the housekeeper or butler.

END OF VOLUME ONE



